

# Lo sar in Mdo kham

## An Advanced English Reader for Tibetan Students

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## INTRODUCTION

### About This Book

This book contains eleven essays describing Lo sar (New Year) celebrations in eleven different villages in Mdo khams. Each essay is divided into two parts. Part one introduces the village. Part two describes Lo sar. All the essays were written by Tibetan students in English. Following every essay are: a list of non-English terms in the essay and their original script (Tibetan and Chinese); two blank pages (for writing vocabulary and a reflection); and exercises about the essay. There are also several appendices at the end of the book. These will be explained later.

This book has three main purposes. Firstly, it is a general advanced English reader. Secondly, it will help the student develop academic English skills, particularly critical reading. Finally, it also helps Tibetan students develop their ability to talk about Tibetan cultural topics in English.

### How To Use This Book

Read each text several times. The first time, look for new words. Then review those new words. Then read the essay again, focusing on the content. You can use the quizzes in Appendix One to test your understanding of the content. Answers are provided after the quizzes. Then, read the essay again, and make an opinion about the essay.

This book introduces much new vocabulary. Important vocabulary has been selected and compiled in Appendix Two. If you meet other new words, do not write Tibetan or Chinese translations on the English text. You can write down important new words on the blank page after the essay, and write the translations there. Then you can review those new words before reading the essay again. Much of the vocabulary is repeated in the essays, because the content is similar – village introductions and description of Lo sar. This repetition will help you recognize and remember the new vocabulary.

In addition to developing your vocabulary, you can also use

this book to learn critical reading skills. Critical reading means developing opinions about what you read. Instead of focusing on content (what the essay is about) you focus on method (how the author wrote it). When you read the essays, you should look for the following common problems.

1. Lies and inaccuracies. For example, "China is in Europe," "Chengdu is the capital of Qinghai," "The origin of the Yellow River is in Gansu," and, "Two plus two equals five." Good writing is truthful and accurate.
2. Vagueness intended to impress rather than inform. "This place has a long history and rich culture," "The region is home to many world-famous sites of great beauty," and, "Countless talented scholars come from X." Good writing is informative. In these cases, good writing would inform us: *how long* the history is, *what* the rich culture is, *what* the famous sites are, and *who* the great scholars are.
3. Lack of detail. For example, "A *thang ka* is a Tibetan painting." A more detailed version would be, " *Thang ka/ga* refers to a form of primarily Tibetan sacred representation consisting of an image panel that is painted, embroidered, or appliquéd, which is often placed in a textile frame. The image panel frequently depicts such imagery as mandalas, deities, famous scenes, or prominent local religious personalities. They are hung up high in monastic halls, village temples, and family homes as objects of veneration. A piece of silk often hangs over the image to prevent defilement by secular life, and protects the image from light and dust. In the context of village ritual, setting up images creates interior and exterior worlds mediated through the representation of the images."<sup>1</sup>
4. Plagiarism. Plagiarism means copying. Copying is OK, but you must say where the information comes from. For example, the quote about *thang ka* above is copied from another book. Therefore, I used quotation marks (") and

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<sup>1</sup> From Bkra shis bzang po (2012) May all Good Things Gather Here: Life, Religion, and Marriage in a Mi nyag Tibetan Village. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 14:343.



wrote the book's information in a footnote. It is bad writing when you copy others' words without saying where those words came from.

You should also develop your own criteria for good writing. When you read each essay, ask yourself, "Is this well-written? Why or why not?" Then you can write your ideas on the second blank page after each essay. Use the vocabulary in Appendix Four to help you write your evaluations.

This book can also help you develop other academic English skills, namely note taking and skimming/ scanning.

Note taking is a very useful skill. You can review large amounts of information without reading every word of a text again. The essays in this book have been structured to help you take notes. Here is an example outline from one essay:

## PART ONE: VILLAGE LIFE IN GSHONG BA VILLAGE

### I. LOCATION

### II. POPULATION

### III. EDUCATION

### IV. AGRICULTURE

### V. HERDING

### VI. CASH INCOME

### VII. YEARLY RITUAL SCHEDULE

## PART TWO: LO SAR

### I. PREPARATION

### II. DAY ONE: VISITING, EATING, AND FIRECRACKERS.

### III. DAY THREE: DANCING AND THROWING FRUIT

### IV. DAY SEVEN: *RTSAM PA* FIGURES AND MONASTIC CHANTING

### V. DAY EIGHT: COUNTY-LEVEL BASKETBALL COMPETITION

### VI. DAY FIFTEEN: THE FINAL DAY

You should use these titles and sub-titles to organize your notes. You can write one or two sentences for each section. Notes do not always use complete, grammatically correct sentences. You can also write down key words, make lists, and draw diagrams. Writing notes will help you find information later, and will also

help you remember information better.

Two more useful skills you can use in this book are skimming and scanning. This means finding information without reading every word of a text. This helps you find what you need more quickly. Scanning means looking at the titles and sub-titles to find the part of the essay you need. Skimming means looking quickly through the relevant part (looking, not reading) until you find words related to your goal. You then read those parts carefully, word for word. Use the following exercises to practice skimming and scanning.

1. In which place are pigs slaughtered?
2. How many authors talk about cultural change?
3. Which villages are nomadic? Which ones are not?
4. Which author compared Lo sar in village and city?
5. Compare the population of five villages. Which one is biggest? Which one is smallest?
6. Compare the education in three villages. Which one has the best education? Which one has the worst?
7. Compare how three different authors define each of these terms: *rtsam pa*, *lab rtse*, *dgu thug*, and *smnyung gnas*.
8. Which villages are in A mdo? Which villages are in Khams? Make a list.
9. Compare the Lo sar preparations in three villages.
10. What are the main differences between Lo sar in Khams and A mdo?

Finally, this book contains many Tibetan words written in the English alphabet. These words are written according to the Wylie system. Appendix Three contains a table explaining the Wylie system. If you want to learn the Wylie system, you can use the table in Appendix Three. You can also study the many examples in the non-English term lists at the end of each essay.

## Acknowledgements

Many people helped write this book. Tshe dbang rdo rje, Timothy Thurston and Kelly Ward helped edit the texts. Tshe dpal rdo rje and Lhun 'grub compiled the non-English vocabulary. Tshe ring bsams grub and Dpa' rtse rgyal checked the Tibetan and Chinese texts. Devin Gonier checked the texts and selected target vocabulary. Keith Dede, Ligaya Beebe, Steve Frediani, Rose Hyson, Sarah Oliphant and students from the 2008 English-Tibetan BA class at Qinghai Normal University class helped check the final texts.



LO SAR IN AN A MDO TIBETAN VILLAGE: FIVE DAYS IN  
GSHONG BA VILLAGE  
Rin chen mtsho

PART ONE: VILLAGE LIFE IN GSHONG BA VILLAGE

I. LOCATION

Gshong ba Village is in Rdo sbis Township, approximately thirty kilometers southwest of Xunhua County Town, in the Haidong Region of Qinghai Province, China. Gshong ba Village consists of two parts, situated one above the other on the side of a valley. The lower part is called Khugs zheng and the upper part Gshong ba.

II. POPULATION

There are approximately 220 people in Gshong ba Village: sixty-nine men, seventy women, and eighty-one children. All are Tibetan.

III. EDUCATION

Approximately 10% of villagers are literate (not including students). In the past, adults often attended school for a few years and then stopped for a variety of reasons; some felt pressured, while others could not afford the tuition. Such people have very limited literacy.

In 2009, there were sixteen university students (seven girls and nine boys), fourteen senior middle school students (eight girls and six boys), ten junior middle school students (three girls and seven boys), and twenty-one primary school students (nine girls and twelve boys) in the village. Seven school-aged children did not attend school (three girls and four boys).

On average, each family has one child that currently attends school. Certain families resist sending children to school. They believe education is a waste of time and money because college graduates often cannot find jobs and support their families.

## IV. AGRICULTURE

All thirty-eight households in Gshong ba Village cultivates barley, wheat, potatoes, and oil-bearing plants. One  $mu^2$  of land can produce 350-400 kilograms of barley. The fields are all irrigated and both chemical and natural fertilizers are used. Some people use pesticides to kill weeds. Others weed by hand because they believe chemical pesticides burn plants. Typically, fields are eight kilometers from the home of their owners.

## V. HERDING

Each Gshong ba household typically has one cow, one pig, and two sheep. The sheep and cows are used for milk and milk products, while the swine are raised for meat. Villagers earn 500-600 RMB per year selling butter and cheese.

Villagers herd animals collectively on nearby mountains. Every household takes turns herding livestock, as organized by the village leader. Families collect fodder in summer, dry it in the sun, and save it to feed the livestock in the winter.

## VI. CASH INCOME

Wealthy families own at least fourteen  $mu$  of land and earn about 2,000 RMB per year selling their excess barley. However, most families have twelve to thirteen  $mu$  of land, which is enough for their needs, and supplies them with a little extra barley to sell.

Villagers also earn money from selling butter and cheese, which are not important parts of the local diet. A typical family earns 500-600 RMB a year selling approximately fifteen kilos each of butter and cheese to businessmen who come to the village.

Villagers also earn cash by working as migrant laborers. Those who are able, dig caterpillar fungus<sup>3</sup> in the Yul shul or Mgo log Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures from May to mid-June. Each

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<sup>2</sup> 1  $mu$  = 0.0666 hectares

<sup>3</sup> This organism is an insect during winter, but becomes a medicinal herb in the summer. It is found in high-altitude areas.

caterpillar fungus was sold for ten to fifteen RMB in 2009. During good seasons, each person can earn 1,500-2,000 RMB. Unfortunately, good seasons happen less and less frequently. Cash earned from caterpillar fungus is spent on education and other family costs, such as New Year festivities. In one year, a village family spends about 500 RMB on food and 400 RMB on clothing. They also spend another 100 RMB per month on electricity and other essentials. In the summertime, certain villagers spend 800-900 RMB on fertilizer.

In total, the average family earns about 4,500 RMB in cash per year and spends about 4,100 RMB of this amount, leaving the family with an extra 400 RMB annually. If the family has a student who attends university, they borrow money for school expenses.

## VII. YEARLY RITUAL SCHEDULE

Apart from Lo sar, the main local festival is the Rdo sbis *lab rtse*<sup>4</sup> that is held on the fifteenth day of the sixth lunar month. Every family in Rdo sbis sends a male representative to raise decorated poles at the *lab rtse* on the mountain behind the Rdo sbis Monastery. This is done to protect local households.

The birthday of Tsong kha pa (1357-1419 CE), the twenty-second of the ninth lunar month, is important in Gshong ba, as he founded the Dge lugs pa sect of Tibetan Buddhism which locals follow. Fasting is observed on this day.

The fifth day of the fourth lunar month is the Buddha's birthday, and thus an auspicious date. People fast and circumambulate the village stupa. Also, on the day of Buddha's enlightenment, the fifteenth day of the fourth lunar month, villagers go to the nearest monastery and nunnery to cook for the monks and nuns.

## PART TWO: LO SAR

After an initial preparation period, the fifteen days of Lo sar are marked by five special days: the first, third, seventh, eighth, and

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<sup>4</sup> 'Mountain deity altar renewal'.

fifteenth days. Traditional Tibetan dress is worn on these days. All fifteen days of Lo sar are special, as everyone rests more than usual, spends time with family and friends, plays, and watches television together. People visit relatives and friends and nearly everybody wears new clothes, especially children. Additionally, people circumambulate the local stupa more often than usual because they have more free time and less work.

Many wedding parties are held during Lo sar. During weddings, folk songs and, later in the night, love songs, are sung. The latter are taboo to sing in the daytime when relatives and elders might hear. The groom commonly visits the bride's home first. In order to show respect, the groom does not sit down. If the matchmaker accompanies the groom, women pull his earlobes. He gives them money or silk to encourage them to stop. The groom goes to the bride's home late at night, and his villagers and family members do not sleep until the bride reaches her new home at one or two a.m. When the bride reaches the groom's home, she prostrates four times. First, she prostrates at the gate of the home compound. Second, she prostrates at the door of the house, where all the family members and guests are eating. Third, she prostrates to the stove, which is made of earth. Finally, the bride prostrates in the family shrine. Next, she takes a teapot, which has had butter and some juniper needles placed in the spout, and pours three bowls of tea for the family shrine and family elders.

Both the bride and the groom wear traditional robes. The bride is decorated with necklaces, earrings, and gold finger rings. Her hair is braided into many braids by an older woman. The bride carries the *me long*, which consists of two vertical rows of four (though sometimes three or five) silver disks, each eight to fifteen centimeters in diameter, on a panel of red cloth. A strip of embroidered cloth is put between the two rows of discs, though in wealthier families, the cloth may be covered in silver panels. Then, the woman's braided hair is attached to the back of these panels.

## I. PREPARATION

Several tasks must be completed before the onset of Lo sar. Traditionally, on the nineteenth day of the twelfth lunar month, the house is thoroughly cleaned, though the windows are cleaned at



any time before or after this day. Clothes are washed and red bread (*tshe snam*) is made from wheat flour, oil, and water. When the oil in this bread is exposed to a flame, a red color results, hence the name. Women usually make the bread. *Tshe snam* is made five or six days before Lo sar and other breads are made the day before Lo sar. However, there is no exact time to make *tshe snam*.

Extra food supplies are purchased. Vegetables, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, and candies, which are not normally bought, are purchased in Rdo sbis Township Town and Xunhua County Town. Wealthy families may spend more than 2,000 RMB, while poor families spend 500 RMB or less.

All the old paper is taken off window frames and replaced with new, colorful paper. Some people cut the paper into the shapes of animals and plants before sticking it on the lattice window frames.

Breads are also prepared to resemble flowers and squares. During Lo sar visits, bread is given to others as gifts. Women take pride in making bread and are proud to display and give away their work.

Lo sar trees (*tso sdong*) are also made during the preparatory period. Branches from thorn trees are used. Candies, jujubes, and other sweets are placed on the thorns. The tree is put in the highest place in the main room of the home, usually in the right corner, and is left there until the end of Lo sar. After Lo sar, children take it down and eat the candies and jujubes.

During the day, usually in the morning, people wash their hair and feet and dress in new clothes, giving them a fresh, clean start for the New Year.

Villagers take candies and cookies to their family shrine room, where many statues and Buddha images are enshrined. Such special offerings are also taken to the village temple, which is taken care of through a rotating schedule of village elders.

New clothes are chosen and purchased in anticipation of Lo sar. Items that have previously been borrowed from other households are all returned before the first day of the New Year; failing to do so brings bad luck in the coming year.

Prior to Lo sar, certain villagers between the ages of seven and twenty practice traditional and modern dances in preparation for a Lo sar performance. Villagers who take part in the county basketball competition held during Lo sar also practice.

## II. DAY ONE: VISITING, EATING, AND FIRECRACKERS.

On this day, new clothes and traditional robes are worn. Friends and family members who cannot be visited are phoned and given Lo sar wishes. Family members visit other village households before midnight. All family members, except grandparents, visit all of the houses in the village, taking apples. When visiting relatives, sugar is given to elder women and liquor to elder men. Elders offer wise, kind words for a long life without illness and younger people prostrate to them. Certain elders repeat the same words for everyone, while others improvise new words for each person. Village children visit all the village families, saying "Lo sar *bzang*! Happy New Year!" The children and family head must visit their mother or wife's family, even if that family is in another village.

A special meal of meat dumplings, boiled meat, and rice with yams is eaten before visiting begins. Each person must eat until completely full. Ordinary bowls and cups are not used for this brings bad luck and trouble in the New Year. New, un-chipped bowls are used.

Before eating, a water libation is offered in the shrine room by grandparents, who then prostrate before the Buddha. If there are no grandparents, the children prostrate to their parents. Next, *bsang*<sup>5</sup> is offered in the burner in each house's courtyard and firecrackers are set off by men. The function of the firecrackers is to offer prayers and thoughts to the Buddha.

## III. DAY THREE: DANCING AND THROWING FRUIT

If households are related to each other, they offer meals to the others in turn. After breakfast, people gather at the village temple. Village men over the age of forty take apples, pears, and candies to toss to the villagers who have gathered. Before the fruits are thrown, villagers prostrate three times to elders who say some words to them. Villagers believe that if elders say such words to them, their lives will be lengthened. Then, young people who have practiced dancing perform. After the dances, elders reward the dancers with money (around 300 RMB for the group) and throw fruit and candies to them. Everyone enjoys the dances. The dancers

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<sup>5</sup> *Bsang* is a type of incense.

typically use the money they receive for a party afterwards. This dance takes place in front of the village temple until lunch time.

#### IV. DAY SEVEN: *RTSAM PA* FIGURES AND MONASTIC CHANTING

A figure called A yas 'bar ma is made of *rtsam pa* on the seventh day of Lo sar. It is shaped like a woman and made by monks from the local monastery in half a day. Each household contributes *rtsam pa* to use in constructing the figures. This special type of *rtsam pa* is made of barley flour mixed only with water, instead of the usual ingredients of barley flour, butter, cheese, and sugar. Before giving the *rtsam pa* to the monks, the villagers rub some on their faces, necks, and hands to remove illness and bad luck, and bring good luck and well-being. Such *rtsam pa* figures are later discarded in a gully. When this occurs, firecrackers are set off to make A yas 'bar ma happy since she can bring disasters. People wish to please her to avoid such occurrences.

Villagers write their age on a piece of wood according to their gender: males use birch wood and women use willow wood. The males' wood pieces are placed on A yas 'bar ma's right-hand side and the females' wood pieces are placed on the left. People believe this lengthens their lifespan.

This story explains the origin of the A yas 'bar ma:

When the Buddha lived in this world, a woman had so many children that she could not find food for them all. She then began stealing babies, which she killed and fed to her children. Local people were aware of this, but could not stop her because of her magic powers. Therefore, people went to the Buddha and told him. To teach her a lesson, the Buddha went to A yas 'bar ma's house and stole one of her babies. A yas 'bar ma discovered this and went to the Buddha to beg for her child's return. The Buddha said, "You have so many children, but still you are sad to lose just one child. Consider how other people feel. Some have only one or two children; if you steal their child how will they feel? Everyone loves their children as you do." A yas 'bar ma listened and promised to stop stealing children. Afterwards, townspeople gave *rtsam pa* figures for A yas 'bar ma's children to eat.

Monastic chanting is also done on this day, in the village temple, by monks from the nearby Gdong sna Monastery. Villagers pay each monk 100 RMB to chant and make A yas 'bar ma figures.

## V. DAY EIGHT: COUNTY-LEVEL BASKETBALL COMPETITION

Starting on the eighth day of the New Year, township basketball competitions are held in twenty local villages. Matches are held over four days in four different villages. A cash prize is given to the winning village team. The amount depends on how rich the village is that hosts the final match. The Rdo sbis Township government contributes some money for the prize and organizes the competition. Prizes may be up to 600 RMB, shared between the team members. This competition began in 1990 in Nyan ba Village, the largest village in Rdo sbis Township, with approximately 200 households.

On this day certain villagers abstain from eating meat. Elders especially like to go to the local monastery and circumambulate the stupa, believing that virtuous actions acquire more merit on this day.

## VI. DAY FIFTEEN: THE FINAL DAY

On this final day, villagers go to the Gdong sna Monastery to circumambulate and prostrate, hoping for a good year and a good harvest. New clothes are taken off, washed, and stored for other special occasions such as the Rdo sbis *lab rtse* festival. People do their best to enjoy themselves, believing that if they end Lo sar auspiciously, the family will have a safe and prosperous New Year. People also set off firecrackers on the house roof or in the courtyard and circumambulate the stupa.

On the same day, monks dance wearing costumes and robes depicting various deities and historical figures. The monks also sing scriptures to a melody only used on this day. The singing lasts about half the day. Additionally, all the monastery temples that are normally closed to visitors are open to the public.

## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

- A yas 'bar ma ཨ་ཡས་འབར་མ། \*name  
*bsang* བསང་། incense  
Gdong sna གདོང་སྐ། \*place  
Gshong pa གཤོང་པ། \*place  
Haidong 海东 \*place  
Khugs zheng ཁུགས་ཞེང་། \*place  
*la rtsed* ལྷ་རྟེན། mountain deity altar  
Lo sar bzang ལོ་སར་བཟང་། Happy New Year  
*me long* མེ་ལོང་། women's hair ornament  
Mgo log མགོ་ལོག་ \*place  
*mu* 亩 0.667 hectares  
Qinghai 青海 \*place  
Rdo sbis རྫོ་སྐས། \*place  
*rtsam pa* རྩམ་པ། roasted barley flour  
*stag pa* ལྷག་པ། birch  
*tshe snam* ཆོ་སྐམ། red bread  
*tsher mar* ཆོར་མར། thorn bush  
*tso sdong* ཆོ་སྣང་། New Year tree  
Tsong kha pa རྩོང་ཁ་པ། \*person  
Xunhua 循化 \*place  
Yul shul ཡུལ་ཤུལ། \*place

WRITE NEW VOCABULARY HERE

WRITE YOUR EVALUATION HERE

## VOCABULARY

Ask these questions to a partner.

1. Are there any college graduates from your village? Are there many or few? What about businessmen?
2. When do you wear traditional robes?
3. What is the most interesting part of the New Year festivities in your village? What do you do during the preparatory period?
4. Where does monastic chanting happen? Who does it? Have you ever been to watch or join monastic chanting?
5. Does your family home have glass windows or lattice windows?
6. Do villagers in your hometown use pesticides? What do you think about this? Is it good or bad to use pesticides?
7. When people get married in your hometown, do they use a matchmaker?
8. Approximately how many families are there in your village? Approximately how many students are there?
9. Give an example of a person (real or fictional) with magic powers. Give an example of a virtuous person.
10. Do you enshrine deities in your home? Do you make libations to them?

## STRUCTURE

Underline the time phrase in each sentence.

1. In the past, adults often attended school for a few years and then stopped for a variety of reasons; some felt pressured, while others could not afford the tuition.
2. In 2009, there were sixteen university students (seven girls and nine boys), fourteen senior middle school students (eight girls and six boys), ten junior middle school students (three girls and seven boys), and twenty-one primary school students (nine girls and twelve boys) in the village.
3. Each caterpillar fungus was sold for ten to fifteen RMB in 2009.
4. In the summertime, certain villagers spend 800-900 RMB on fertilizer.
5. When the Buddha lived in this world, a woman had so many children that she could not find food for them all.



## EXERCISES

Do these exercises, then check your answers in the text.

*of on to for*

The fifth day \_\_\_\_\_ the fourth lunar month is the Buddha's birthday, and thus an auspicious date. People fast and circumambulate the village stupa. Also, \_\_\_\_\_ the day of Buddha's enlightenment, the fifteenth day \_\_\_\_\_ the fourth lunar month, villagers go \_\_\_\_\_ the nearest monastery and nunnery \_\_\_\_\_ cook \_\_\_\_\_ the monks and nuns.

Many wedding parties (is/are) held during Lo sar. During weddings, folk songs and, later in the night, love songs, are (sing/sang/sung). The latter (is/are) taboo to sing in the daytime when relatives and elders might (heard/hear). The groom commonly (visit/visits) the bride's home first. In order to (shows/show) respect, the groom does not (sit/sits) down. If the matchmaker accompanies the groom, women (pulls/ pull) his earlobes. He (give/gives) them money or silk to encourage them to stop. The groom (go/goes) to the bride's home late at night, and his villagers and family members do not (sleeps/sleep) until the bride (reach/reaches) her new home at one or two a.m. When the bride (reach/reaches) the groom's home, she (prostrate/prostrates) four times. First, she (prostrate/prostrates) at the gate of the home compound. Second, she (prostrate/prostrates) at the door of the house, where all the family members and guests are (eats/eating). Third, she (prostrate/prostrates) to the stove, which is (make/made) of earth. Finally, the bride (prostrate/prostrates) in the family shrine. Next, she (take/takes) a teapot, which has had butter and some juniper needles (placed/ places) in the spout, and (pours/ pour) three bowls of tea for the family shrine and family elders.

*are is be*

Lo sar trees (*tso sdong*) \_\_\_\_\_ also made during the preparatory period. Branches from thorn trees (*tshe mar*) \_\_\_\_\_ used. Candies, jujubes, and other sweets \_\_\_\_\_ placed on the thorns. The tree \_\_\_\_\_ put in the highest place in the main room of the home, usually in the right corner, and \_\_\_\_\_ left there until the end of Lo sar. After Lo sar, children take it down and eat the candies and jujubes.

*figure singing visitor costume melody monastery various*

On the same day, monks wearing \_\_\_\_\_s and robes depicting \_\_\_\_\_ deities and historical \_\_\_\_\_s dance. The monks also sing scriptures to a \_\_\_\_\_ only used on this day; the \_\_\_\_\_ lasts about half the day. Additionally, all the \_\_\_\_\_ temples that are normally closed to \_\_\_\_\_s are open to the public.

## CONTENT

1. Where is Gshong ba?
2. What is the educational situation in Gshong ba Village?
3. Why do some villagers weed by hand rather than using pesticides?
4. Which is more important for villagers – herding or agriculture?
5. Are villagers rich or poor? Give evidence.
6. What are some important rituals in the village? Do you do those rituals in your village?
7. How many special days are there in Gshong ba Lo sar? What dates are those special days?
8. What happens at weddings in Gshong ba? Do people do the same things at weddings in your village?
9. What are the main preparations during the preparatory period before the New Year festivities?
10. What happens on the first and third days of Lo sar?
11. Why do people circumambulate the stupa more than usual on the eighth day of Lo sar?
12. Tell me about A myes 'bar ma.
13. Tell me about the basketball competition.
14. What happens on the last day of Lo sar in Gshong ba Village?
15. Would you like to join the new year festivities in Gshong ba? Give reasons.

A TIBETAN NEW YEAR IN RTSI GZHUNG THANG  
VILLAGE, DPA' RIS  
Li Ping/ Tshe brtan sgrol ma

PART ONE: RTSI GZHUNG THANG VILLAGE

Rtsi gzhung thang is a Tibetan herding community in Da lun Township, seventy-eight kilometers from Tianzhu County Town, Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County, Gansu Province. Rtsi gzhung thang is situated in the west of Tianzhu County. There are eight towns<sup>6</sup> and eleven townships<sup>7</sup> in the county. Rtsi gzhung thang is thirty-five kilometers from the county town. The population of the county is about 220,000, of which approximately 24% is Tibetan.

Rab rgyas Monastery was built during the Ming Dynasty by Snun bsod dba' sug bla ma. During the reign of the Qianlong Emperor the monastery was destroyed. Later, Lama Dba sga bsun rebuilt the monastery. Then, Dba sga bsun and Lama Gyun lo bsun of Gannan went to Lhasa and visited the thirteenth Dalai Lama who gave them golden statues and other treasures for the monastery. In 1958, the monastery was destroyed and the valuables lost. In 1988, the monastery was rebuilt at a cost of about 240,000 RMB.

I. RELIGION

All villagers follow Tibetan Buddhism and go to the *lab rtse* to offer *bsang*, clean water, liquor, and *kha btags* to beseech the local mountain god, A myes Dkes snyan, to protect the grassland and livestock and prevent disasters. County town residents visit Rab rgyas Monastery to worship and circumambulate on such special occasions as the first and fifteenth days of the first lunar month, and the first day of the seventh lunar month.

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<sup>6</sup> Huazang Si, Dachai Gou, Anyuan Zheng, Tanshan Lin, Haxi, Saishi Si, Shimen, and Songshan.

<sup>7</sup> Tiantang, Duoshi, Dahong Gou, Dongda Tan, Xida Tan, Saila Long, Maozang, Dongping, Qilian, Danma, and Zhaxi Xiulong.

Villagers invite a monk from Dar lun Monastery<sup>8</sup> to go to the *lab rtse* and chant for rain during summer droughts. Recurrent nightmares, or incurable human and livestock illnesses are cause for a family to invite a monk to their home to chant for well-being. Some families have a *mchod khang* 'shrine', a small room apart from other rooms. In this room, oil lamps are placed before images of important lamas in a case. In addition, there is a small china bowl in which incense is burned. Every home has an altar where *bsang* and clean water are offered.

## II. LANGUAGE

Most Rtsi gzhung thang villagers speak Chinese and understand little Tibetan. A few elders over the age of sixty speak Tibetan fluently. Chinese speakers in Tianzhu speak a dialect similar to Qinghai Chinese dialect. Wuwei dialect is also spoken by some, which is different in terms of tone and lexicon. For example, in Tianzhu dialect, speakers pronounce 找 'zhao' while Wuwei dialect speakers say 'xing'.

## III. EDUCATION

Rtsi gzhung thang Primary School with grades one to six was built in the early 1980s. In 2009, the school had few students because most attended school in the county town where they could study English subjects that were unavailable in the village school. Teachers at the Rtsi gzhung thang School completed middle school and four years of vocational training. Some graduated from university. There is one college graduate from the village who teaches in the county town. In 2008, two students were soon to graduate from BA programs. Five *dazhuan* students graduated from Hezuo Teachers' School, Gannan Prefecture, in 2007, but, a year later, remained unemployed. One physically-disabled graduate from Lanzhou Medical School (2008) established a medical clinic in the village and receives 300 RMB a month from the government.

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<sup>8</sup> Dar lun dgon pa is a monastery in a village of Da lun Township.

#### IV. LIVELIHOOD

Rtsi gzhung thang Village is a pastoral community. *Rtsi du*, a kind of short grass used to make brooms, grows there in abundance. *Gzhung* is a plain, as is *thang*, hence the village name. Families usually have sheep, dogs, pigs, and chickens. In the past, many families had yaks. Now, however, only a few families have yaks, because of the poor condition of the grassland. Despite the planting of much winter fodder, there is insufficient fodder to raise yaks. A poor family has eighty to ninety sheep and a dog. An average family has around 130 sheep, one pig, three chickens, and one dog. A rich family has 400-500 sheep, fifty yaks, a pig, a dog, and several chickens.

In 2007, the grassland was divided among households according to the number of family members in each household. Each person was allocated sixty-five *mu* of land. Those who tend their livestock well have a relatively good income. On average, the annual income from selling sheep is 5,000 RMB. Families spend about 1,000 RMB on cigarettes, liquor, fireworks, meat, vegetables, candy, seeds, and fruit for *Lo sar*. Villagers may gather annually and discuss donating about 1,000 RMB to poor families for *Lo sar*.

Residents collect caterpillar fungus on a mountain, nearby Maomao Shan (A myes Dkes snyan). No collection fee is charged. Each caterpillar fungus was sold for twenty to twenty-five RMB; an average collector earned around 1,000 RMB per year.

Another income source is migrant labor. There is no specific time to leave the village for this work. Some villagers are absent for a few weeks while others may be gone for more than a year. Migrant laborers harvest crops and do construction work, mostly in nearby areas. In recent years, picking cotton in Xinjiang has become a common form of migrant labor for women, whereas men are more likely to dig coal in Lhasa or Jiuquan. Villagers may earn 5,000-6,000 RMB per year doing such work.

#### V. HOUSING

Houses were made of stone, soil, and wood in the past. Some villagers made their houses themselves, while others employed

professional builders. Villagers and builders planned the structures together. Village houses typically had three to five rooms.

Villagers' living conditions have improved and many now build brick houses with floor to ceiling glass panels. These houses have four rooms, including a sitting room, bedroom, and kitchen. In 2008, bricks were bought in Tianzhu County for 0.15 RMB per brick. Villagers spend 5,000 RMB on the cost of bricks alone. Professional builders now plan and build village houses.

At least one room in each house contains a *kang*, a hollow platform of brick, adobe, and stone, which can be heated by burning straw or yak dung inside it. The *kang* is used to sit and sleep on.

## VI. CLOTHING

Locals wear modern clothes on such special occasions as weddings and elders' birthdays. Although all villagers have robes, they are not worn during Lo sar except by a few elders.

## PART TWO: LO SAR

### I. LO SAR PREPARATIONS

By the eighteenth day of the twelfth lunar month, locals are busy cleaning the house, making bread, and washing clothes.

HOUSE CLEANING. The eighteenth and nineteenth days of the twelfth lunar month are times to clean houses. If the weather is good, two rooms are cleaned in one day. If the weather is bad, several days might be needed to finish cleaning the entire house. TV sets, sofas, cooking utensils, pillows, quilts, and tables are moved outside the house. A new straw broom is used to sweep ceilings, walls, and floors. Covers and blankets are taken from the *kang* and dusted, and the chimney and stove are cleaned using a short broom. In addition, fresh dry grass is spread on the *kang*, over which a felt blanket and sheet are placed. Finally, the furniture is moved back into the room. Generally, parents oversee

this work that requires six to seven hours to complete. All family members participate.

BREAD. On the twenty-first day of the twelfth lunar month, steamed bread is made. *Mantou* and *huajuan* are made using wheat flour dough which has been purchased previously in Huazangsi (an alternative name for Tianzhu County Town). The leavened dough is prepared the night before using yeast, which has also been purchased in Huazangsi. Bread is made in the morning by the women of the family, assisted by neighbors and relatives. To make *mantou*, cylinders of dough about forty centimeters long and five centimeters thick are rolled by hand, and cut into pieces less than ten centimeters long. These pieces are rolled into balls, placed into wood steamers, and steamed for forty minutes. The cooked *mantou* are put on a table to cool and then stored in boxes.

To make *huajuan*, the dough is first flattened out. Then, rapeseed oil and spices (*xiangdou zi*, *jianghuang*, and *hongqu*) are put on the dough, which is then rolled into a cylinder as with the *mantou*, and cut. These pieces are then formed into flower-like shapes and steamed. Cooking *mantou* and *huajuan* takes all day.

On the twenty-third day, *yos dbor* 'red bread' is made from leavened dough prepared the night before. At about five o'clock a.m., the dough is kneaded before rapeseed oil is poured into a pot and boiled. A frog is made from the dough and placed on the edge of the pot; the frog watches over the oil and the bread. Two kinds of red bread are prepared: *yos dbor* and *mahua*. With a rolling pin, women flatten the dough into sheets about thirty centimeters long and ten centimeters wide, then cut these into smaller pieces along the long edge. Each piece is fifteen centimeters long and a few centimeters wide and has three vertical slits. These smaller pieces are then divided into four strips. The middle two strips are crossed over and the piece is twisted as the bottom edge and pulled through the gap between the strips, making a bow-tie shape. These shapes are then tossed into the bubbling oil and men stir them with a metal rod. When the bread turns a deep golden brown, the bread is removed and put in a basin.

To make *mahua*, dough is rolled into pencil-thin cylinders about thirty centimeters long. These strips are joined at the ends to make a loop, which is twisted into a plait and deep-fried. As with

*yos dbor*, a man tends to the bread while it is frying and puts it into a basin when it is cooked. When all the *mahua* and *yos dbor* are cooked, the dough frog is cooked in the remaining oil and eaten.

PREPARATIONS UNTIL THE DAY BEFORE LO SAR. At around 8:30a.m., Zaoye Niangniang (Wangmu Niangniang) is sent to heaven to celebrate New Year and the earth's New Year celebrations also begin. Bread, buns, seeds, candies, apples, and oranges are put on the stove as offerings. *Bsang* is burned, oil lamps are lit, and family members prostrate three times to Zaoye Niangniang.

On the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth lunar month, radishes and onions are washed, diced, and mixed with minced mutton and salt. Leavened dough is prepared. The next day, this dough is cut into small pieces and rolled into long, thin pieces by women. The women then cut these pieces into smaller pieces and press them with their hands. The mixed mutton, onion, and radishes are stuffed into the pieces, wrapped up into buns, and placed onto steamers above boiling water.

After making steamed stuffed buns, sheets, pillowcases, televisions, quilts, sofa covers, curtains, and door hangings are washed. Generally, young women wash clothes by hand, though some families now use washing machines. Washing may require two days to complete.

On the morning of the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth lunar month, mutton, beef, and pork are boiled. The mutton is from villagers' sheep, and the beef and pork are bought from shops in the county town. That afternoon, *youxiang* 'square pancakes' are made from wheat flour, and then taken to ancestral graves the following day. To make these cakes, dough is kneaded and flattened. Then, a knife is used to cut the dough into trapezoids. Next, a little oil is poured in a pan, and the dough is fried. The pieces of dough are kept separate while they fry at low heat. Women make about two plates of *youxiang*, which takes forty-five minutes.

On the twenty-eighth day of the twelfth lunar month, villagers visit their ancestral graves to pay a New Year visit to their ancestors. Bags of candy, sunflower seeds, watermelon seeds, fruits, bread, buns, pancakes, bottles of salt-less tea and liquor,



conifer needles, *bsang rtsi*, (*rtsam pa*, conifer needles, jujubes, walnuts, and sugar mixed together) and yak dung are brought to ancestral graves. After arriving, villagers make a fire with grass and yak dung, then put candies, seeds, jujubes, and *youxiang* on the fire. Then, in another place, *bsang* is burned and bread and fruits are placed in front of the ancestral graves. *Huangzhi*, 'yellow paper,' and *zhiqian*, 'imitation money,' are also burned. Villagers prostrate three times to the ancestral grave. Afterwards, they picnic, eating boiled meat. Men also drink liquor. When the smoldering *bsang* extinguishes itself, villagers return home. Graves are far from the village and the gravesites are separated. Some are in a small valley, and others are on mountain slopes. If the graves are relatively nearby, all family members go to visit them. However, if the graves are far away, only a few family members go.

## II. LO SAR EVE

On the last day of the twelfth lunar month, villagers rise early, clean the dirt from old sheets, place new sheets on the *kang*, and sweep all the rooms. Men stick antithetical couplets on either side of the house's front door. They are mostly in Chinese and say, for example, "*Wu man chun feng chun man wu, men ying xi qi xi ying men* The house is warmed by spring wind, and all the family is happy to welcome others into the home." Very few families use antithetical couplets in Tibetan. Next, the courtyard is swept.

At four p.m., family members take turns washing their hair. Women begin making dumplings. Buns or other bread is given to the family dog because villagers believe that all creatures celebrate New Year. Villagers herd sheep into pens near the house in the evening.

Plates of bread, fruit, candy, and jujubes are set before Buddha images in the shrine. *Bsang* and oil lamps are lit in front of the shrine.

When all the chores are complete, family members eat a meal of dumplings stuffed with mutton, onion, and radish. At night, they watch the New Year's Eve entertainment on TV and eat seeds, candy, jujubes, and fruit. The mother or father of the home

places a round stone<sup>9</sup> that they previously picked up outside in the stove at about 11:30p.m. When it is glowing red, it is removed from the stove using tongs. The stone is placed on top of conifer needles in a pan, over which boiling water and vinegar are poured. The pan is carried to each room, and family members hold their heads over the pan. The rising steam is thought to purify their body. Finally, the contents of the pan are poured out on clean ground to purify the home.

### III. THE FIRST DAY OF LO SAR

On the thirtieth day of the twelfth lunar month at about midnight, villagers set off fireworks. People do not sleep until dawn.<sup>10</sup> At five a.m., villagers rise again, put on new clothes, light oil lamps in front of the shrine, burn *bsang* on the wall outside the house, prostrate three times to the mountain god, and eat breakfast. After finishing these tasks, they visit their grandparents, taking such gifts as milk, tea leaves, liquor, and white *kha btags*. The relatives greet their grandparents by saying "*A ye a myes nian guo zhe hao sha?* Happy New Year, Grandparents!" and prostrating three times. In return, their grandparents give them around ten RMB each. Next, villagers sit on a sofa or *kang*, drink milk tea, and eat bread, buns, beef, and mutton. In the evening, this is repeated.

### IV. THE SECOND AND THIRD DAY OF LO SAR

The morning and evening of these days is like the first day. *Bsang* is burned and oil lamps are lit in the shrine. Such activities stop after three days.

### V. THE 15TH DAY OF LO SAR

The fifteenth day of Lo sar is the last day of Lo sar. In the morning, people light oil lamps in front of the shrine, offer *bsang*, then prostrate three times to mountain deities and living Buddhas.

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<sup>9</sup> The stone weighs about two kilos.

<sup>10</sup> People went to sleep at one a.m. in 2008.

Mutton, chicken, and pork are eaten for breakfast. Dumplings stuffed with mutton, onion, and radish are eaten for dinner. After dinner, villagers jump over small, burning piles of straw outside their homes. The piles are odd in number. People jump over these piles until the fire dies. Fireworks are then set off, after which villagers return home.

Weddings are often held during Lo sar. The groom's family prepares by cleaning the house, inviting villagers or professional cooks to prepare food, and inviting relatives and villagers to the celebration. The groom's family also prepares *phye mar* – a heaped bowl of barley flour topped with a sun and moon sculpted out of butter. The *phye mar* is placed in the room where the bride will stay in her new home. Relatives and villagers bring gifts of tea leaves, bottles of liquor, bolts of cloth, blankets, and money (twenty to 200 RMB). A member of the groom's family records what each person gives.

After arriving, guests eat red bread and drink tea, beer, soft drinks, and liquor. Later, the bride arrives with three cars: one for her and two for her relatives. Fire crackers are set off when she arrives. A local custom concerning zodiac signs dictates that certain people must avoid the bride. If the bride's animal year is, for example, the year of the tiger, then people whose zodiac years are in opposition to the tiger should not be seen by the bride when she arrives. Ignoring this may lead to illness and death.

When the bride enters the gate with her entourage, the groom's side offers liquor and sings to the bride's male relatives in the order of oldest to youngest. Then, the bride and her entourage are allowed to enter the home. The bride goes to her newly prepared room while the male guests sit, eat a little bread, and drink tea.

Next, people display the dowry clothes, shoes, embroidery, luggage, and a television or a washing machine. The bride and groom wear Tibetan robes and stand in the center of the courtyard, where they prostrate to seniors and offer them liquor. Then, someone announces the details of the bride's dowry and a big meal is enjoyed. Many kinds of dishes are provided by the groom's family. After the meal, men and women drink liquor.

## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

- bsang* བསང་། incense
- Da lun ད་ལུན། \*place
- dazhuan* 大专 Associate Degree
- Dpa ris དཔ་རིས་རིམ། \*place
- Gannan 甘南 \*place
- Gansu 甘肃 \*place
- Hezuo 合作 \*place
- hongqu* 红曲 \*spice
- huajuan* 花卷 a kind of bread
- huangzhi* 黄纸 yellow paper
- jianghuang* 姜黄 \*spice
- Jiuquan 九泉 \*place
- kang* 炕 adobe bed
- kha btags* ཁ་བཏགས། white silk scarf
- lab rtse* ལ་རྩེ། mountain deity altar
- Lanzhou 兰州 \*place
- Lasa 拉萨 \*place
- mahua* 麻花 Twisted Bread
- mantou* 馒头 bread bun
- mchod khang* མཚོད་ཁང་། shrine
- Ming chao 明朝 Ming Dynasty
- mu* 亩 0.666 hectares
- phye mar* ཕྱེ་མར། a bowl of barley flour
- Qianlong 乾隆 Qianlong
- rtsam pa* རྩམ་པ། roasted barley flour
- rtsi du* རྩི་དུ། a short grass
- Rtsi gzhung thang རྩི་གཞུང་ཐང་། \*place
- Tianzhu 天祝 \*place
- Wangmu Niangniang 王母娘娘 \*deity

*Wu man chun feng chun man wu, men ying xi qi xi ying men* 屋满  
春风春满屋,门盈喜气喜盈门 The house is warmed by  
spring wind, and all the family is happy to welcome others  
into the home

Wuwei 武威 \*place

*xiangdouzi* 香豆子 \*spice

Xining 西宁 \*place

Xinjiang 新疆 \*place

*yos dbor* ཡས་དབོར། red bread

*youxiang* 油香 square pancakes

*zhao* 找 to find

*zhiqian* 纸钱 imitation money

Zoaye Niangniang 灶爷娘娘 \*deity

WRITE NEW VOCABULARY HERE

WRITE YOUR EVALUATION HERE

## VOCABULARY

Ask these questions to a partner.

1. Do you have ancestral graves in your village?
2. What is villagers approximate annual income in your village?
3. Can you think of anything that is shaped like a cylinder?
4. Do families in your village need to pay a dowry when they marry?
5. What fodder do people feed to livestock in your village?
6. Are there any lexical differences between your dialect and your partner's dialect?
7. Do your parents or other family members go for migrant labor? What do they do? Where do they go?
8. Are there any physically disabled people in your village? Talk about them.
9. What food is cooked in wood steamers?
10. What township do you live in?

## STRUCTURE

... such ... as....

Example 1. County town residents visit Rab rgyas dgon pa to worship and circumambulate on **such** special occasions **as** the first and fifteenth days of the first lunar month, and the first day of the seventh lunar month.

Example 2. Locals wear modern clothes on **such** special occasions **as** weddings and elders' birthday.

Example 3. After finishing these tasks, they visit their grandparents, taking **such** gifts **as** milk, tea leaves, liquor, and white *kha btags*.

Answer the following questions using a ... such ... as ... structure.

1. What subjects do your classmates study?
2. What things do your villagers buy before Lo sar?
3. What things would you prepare before a picnic?
4. What do you need to do to be successful?
5. What places can I visit in Lha sa?



## EXERCISES

Do these exercises, then check your answers in the text.

*are be is*

The eighteenth and nineteenth days of the twelfth lunar month \_\_\_\_\_ times to clean houses. If the weather \_\_\_\_\_ good, two rooms \_\_\_\_\_ cleaned in one day. If the weather \_\_\_\_\_ bad, several days might \_\_\_\_\_ needed to finish cleaning the entire house. TV sets, sofas, cooking utensils, pillows, quilts, and tables \_\_\_\_\_ moved outside the house. A new straw broom \_\_\_\_\_ used to sweep ceilings, walls, and floors. Covers and blankets \_\_\_\_\_ taken from the *kang* and dusted, and the chimney and stove are cleaned using a short broom. In addition, fresh dry grass \_\_\_\_\_ spread on the *kang*, over which a felt blanket and sheet \_\_\_\_\_ placed. Finally, the furniture \_\_\_\_\_ moved back into the room.

Next, people (displays/display) the dowry clothes, shoes, embroidery, luggage, and a television or a washing machine. The bride and groom (wears/wear/wearing) Tibetan robes and (stands/stand) in the center of the courtyard, where they (prostrate/prostrates) to seniors and offer them liquor. Then, someone (announce/announces) the details of the bride's dowry and a big meal (are/is/be) enjoyed. Many kinds of dishes (is/are/be) provided by the groom's family. After the meal, men and women (drinks/drink/drank) liquor.

1. *previously* 2. *glowing* 3. *rising* 4. *members* 5. *vinegar* 6. *candy* 7. *watch* 8. *out on* 9. *on top of* 10. *stuffed with*

When all the chores are complete, family members eat a meal of dumplings \_\_\_\_\_ mutton, onion, and radish. At night, they \_\_\_\_\_ the New Year's Eve entertainment on TV and eat seeds, \_\_\_\_\_, jujubes, and fruit. The mother or father of the home places a round stone that they \_\_\_\_\_ picked up outside in the stove at about 11:30p.m. When it is \_\_\_\_\_ red, it is removed from the stove using tongs. The stone is placed \_\_\_\_\_ conifer needles in a pan, over which boiling water and \_\_\_\_\_ are poured. The pan is carried to each room, and family \_\_\_\_\_ hold their heads over the pan. The \_\_\_\_\_ steam is thought to purify their body. Finally, the contents of the pan are poured \_\_\_\_\_ clean ground to purify the home.

*with in of to for off*

The fifteenth day \_\_\_\_\_ Lo sar is the last day \_\_\_\_\_ Lo sar. \_\_\_\_\_ the morning, people light oil lamps \_\_\_\_\_ front \_\_\_\_\_ the shrine, offer *bsang*, then prostrate three times \_\_\_\_\_ mountain deities and living Buddhas. Mutton, chicken, and pork are eaten \_\_\_\_\_ breakfast. Dumplings stuffed \_\_\_\_\_ mutton, onion, and radish are eaten \_\_\_\_\_ dinner. After dinner, villagers jump over small, burning piles \_\_\_\_\_ grass outside their homes. The fire piles are odd \_\_\_\_\_ number. People jump over these piles until the fire dies. Fireworks are then set \_\_\_\_\_, after which villagers return home.

## CONTENT

1. What language is spoken in Rtsi gzhung thang?
2. Where is Rtsi gzhung thang?
3. When do villagers invite monks to their home to chant? Is this the same in your hometown?
4. Who established a medical clinic in the village?
5. Are villagers herders or farmers? How do they make cash income?
6. How are houses of the past and modern houses different?
7. What types of bread are made in the preparatory period?
8. What do villagers do for Zao ye Niangniang?
9. What do villagers do when they visit their ancestral grave?
10. What happens on Lo sar eve?
11. What happens on the third day of Lo sar?
12. How are the New Year festivities concluded?
13. Are weddings in Rtsi gzhung thang similar or different to weddings in your hometown?
14. What are some unique things about Lo sar in Rtsi gzhung thang?

# TIBETAN NEW YEAR IN BDE CHEN VILLAGE

## Brtan ma skyid

### PART ONE: VILLAGE LIFE

#### I. DPA' RIS COUNTY AND BDE CHEN VILLAGE: LOCATION, POPULATION, AND NAME

Bde chen Village is located in Bkra shis phyug lung thang Township in the southwest of Dpa' ris (Tianzhu) Tibetan Autonomous County, Gansu Province. There are nineteen townships<sup>11</sup> in Dpa' ris County, throughout which are scattered members of several minority nationalities, including Monguor (Tu), Tibetan, Hui, Han, Man, Dongxiang, Yugur, Uyghur, Miao, Zhuang, Bao'an, and Salar. The total population of Dpa' ris is 212,957.<sup>12</sup> Tibetans constitute 31.6% and other nationalities make up 68.4%.<sup>13</sup> There is a monastery called Huazangsi (Rab rgyas dgon pa) in the county town and therefore, locals use Huazangsi to refer to the whole county. Locals say this monastery was built in the first years of the Ming Dynasty by a lama called Chos kyi rdo rje. He was a pilgrim and already elderly when he passed the site and decided to build a monastery and stay there for the rest of his life. Some time during the Qing Dynasty this monastery was destroyed and in 1949, it was rebuilt by local people; four monks lived there with 1,000 sheep given by locals. In 1958, the monastery was destroyed again. In 1981, Huazangsi was rebuilt again. Today there are seven monks and one lama in the monastery.

Bde chen Village is sixty-three kilometers from Dpa' ris County seat; it is a pastoral area where agriculture cannot be practiced because of the harsh climate. The altitude of Bkra shis phyug lung thang Township is between 2,800 and 3,400 meters above sea level. Bkra shis phyug lung thang Township's acreage is

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<sup>11</sup> The nineteen townships are Xidatan, Dongdatan, Saishizi, Bailin, Anyuan, Zhucha, Zhaxixiulong, Haxi, Huazang, Danma, Duoshi, Tanshanling, Tiantang, Sailalong, Dongpin, Maozang, Dahonggou, Shimen, Dachagou.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.gstianzhu.gov.cn>, accessed 1 July 2008

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.gstianzhu.gov.cn>, accessed 1 July 2008

459.2 square kilometers and there are five villages<sup>14</sup> containing 1,087 households and approximately 4,580 people. The ethnic composition of the township includes Tibetans, Han, Monguor, Hui, and Mongols, among which Tibetans comprise the majority.

Before 1962, Bde chen Village was called Jag lung. *Jag* means 'rob' and *lung* means 'valley'. Local people said this name was used because Ma Bufang's<sup>15</sup> army came to Bde chen Village in around 1946, stealing livestock and property. At that time people were frightened and harassed by Ma Bufang's bandits for several years. Especially at night, robbers came. Life for local people became peaceful after the Communist Army defeated Ma Bufang's army. In 1962, a lama called Blo bzang rgya mtsho passed Jag lung and asked his attendant the name of that wonderful valley. When he heard that this beautiful place was called Jag lung, he felt sad and changed the place's name to Bkra shis phyug lung thang, meaning 'rich splendid place'. In 1966, Bkra shis phyug lung thang united with neighboring Yongfen Town but separated again in 1983.

## II. HISTORY

From 1958 to 1962, all the local landlords were put in prison, leaving their women and children at home. All the property from the landlords' families was collected and their relatives were made to live in livestock pens. Meetings were held daily to let common people judge and punish landlords' relatives. Civilians beat these people and forced them to do heavy work every day. During this time, if families put photos of lamas in their house, they would be punished and made to kneel in front of Mao Zedong's photo and apologize. The family members of former landlords could not visit the homes of commoners, even if they were close relatives. During

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<sup>14</sup> Nannigou, Phungs nag ras, Bde Chen, Chenjiaduo, Fangchagou, Rdo kardri (*rdo* means stone, and *kardri*, in the local Tibetan dialect, has the sense of white, *dkar*).

<sup>15</sup> Ma Bufang (1903-1975) was chairman of the Qinghai Provincial Government. During his rule in the 1930s and 1940s, there was much bloody conflict with Tibetans in Qinghai. In the summer of 1948, the Communist Army arrived and defeated Ma Bufang's forces.

the New Year, members of landlords' families had to wear paper hats and go to commoners' families to do such housework as sweeping the courtyard, fetching water, and collecting fuel. During this time, people were forbidden from speaking and studying Tibetan; therefore, many Tibetans in the area cannot speak Tibetan.

### III. RELIGION

Bde chen villagers practice Tibetan Buddhism. Although there is no monastery near the village, there is a large stupa, called Byang chub, in the center of the village, which was built in May 2005. People worship and circumambulate this stupa every day.

On the first day of the sixth lunar month, Nor bu bsam grub *lab rtse*<sup>16</sup> is renewed by local people. A local proscription forbids women from going; only men renew the *lab rtse* and offer *bsang*,<sup>17</sup> clean water,<sup>18</sup> *kha btags*<sup>19</sup> and liquor there. Women are thought to have unclean bodies which anger the local mountain deities, A myes ka drod and Nor bu bsam grub. These deities protect livestock. In daily life both men and women<sup>20</sup> often chant and scatter *rlung rta* papers<sup>21</sup> while circumambulating the *lab rtse*, to ask the mountain god to protect their grassland and livestock, and to prevent disasters befalling the community. Locals, especially students, also go to the *lab rtse* of A myes dmar mtho, but there is no specific day that they must do so. Students and educated people

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<sup>16</sup> *Lab rtse* is an altar for the mountain deity, made of wooden arrows and knives painted in different colors. After inserting these weapons, people tie wool, yak hair, mani flags, and silk sheets on the wooden arrows and knives.

<sup>17</sup> A mixture of roasted barley, butter, candies, conifer needles, and fruits offered to mountain gods.

<sup>18</sup> This water is taken from a spring and put in a clean container.

<sup>19</sup> *Kha btags* are silk scarves used by Tibetans when greeting people.

<sup>20</sup> Though women are forbidden from going to the *lab rtse* on certain occasions, such as during Lo sar, they may go on regular days.

<sup>21</sup> A small square paper on which is printed a horse carrying a jewel, as well as scriptures.

make pilgrimages to this *lab rtse*, taking one day to go there and come back. This *lab rtse* is made from arrows and knives, but people also hang mirrors, needles, pencils, and note books in which they have written their names, in the hope of becoming more knowledgeable.

Every household has their own *mchod khang* 'shrine' which is separate from other rooms. They set pictures of lamas in the shrine, in front of which rapeseed oil lamps are lit every morning. Seven small copper bowls are filled with clean water and set in the shrine by men or women, depending on who has time. The water in these bowls is changed every morning and butter lamps are lit in front of Buddha images. Either a woman or man offers *bsang* every day in the family courtyard.

Every family ordinarily chants *ma Ni*<sup>22</sup> after eating dinner. Usually they chant Skyabs 'gro 'Going for Refuge'.<sup>23</sup> When people are seriously ill, they invite monks to chant and exorcise evils, ghosts, or bodily pollution. If people have a cold or other illness, they boil vinegar, and *thang*<sup>24</sup> to cure their sickness. There is a local clinic, but people are unwilling to go there, because medicines are expensive, costing at least 15 RMB.

In the county town, elders visit Rab rgyas dgon pa to worship and circumambulate it. On such special occasions as the twenty-second of the ninth lunar month and the first day of Lo sar, people go to offer *bsang* and light butter lamps. Monks chant scriptures all day, and are offered fruits and food by lay visitors.

A *lha rta*, 'god horse' woman called Nyi ma lha ba resides near the county town. She is a Han and was born some time around 1940. In the past, she was a farmer and led a simple life. However, she died from an illness when she was around 50 and was revived seven days later, after which she became a fortune-teller. Once every year, a white *lha rta* possesses her body. She claims to not

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<sup>22</sup> Buddhist mantra.

<sup>23</sup> Bla ma la skyabs su mchi'o  
Sangs rgyas la skyabs su mchi'o  
Chos la skyabs su mchod  
Dge 'dun la skyabs gsum mchi'o

<sup>24</sup> *Thang* is a soup made from herbs which have been collected locally and boiled together twice. When consumed it is thought efficacious in treating colds. Herbs are collected from the tops of mountains in the summer and then dried under the house roof.

know what she is talking about when possessed. To enter trance, she first ties a red coif around her head and wears a string of bells on her shoulder. Then, her male assistant burns yellow paper which he passes around her body three times. After a few minutes, her body begins shaking and she produces horse-like sounds. While possessed, people tell her their difficulties and she writes down solutions in Chinese on a piece of paper, which she gives to the people. She writes very quickly, with her eyes closed.

#### IV. LANGUAGE

All Bde chen villagers speak A mdo Tibetan. Most elders speak fluent Tibetan whereas young people speak Tibetan mixed with many Chinese words. Many local Chinese can speak and understand Tibetan and lead a Tibetan lifestyle, following Tibetan religion, including funeral practices. Local Tibetans still sing traditional Tibetan songs, including *bstod glu* 'praise songs' and *la yi* 'love songs' (written *la gzhas* in literary Tibetan), and *chang glu* 'drinking songs'. Men above sixty sing King Gesar's songs learnt from radio, by memory from others, or from books and still tell folk stories and riddles to young people. This situation is different from many other townships in Dpa' ris County, where Tibetans no longer speak Tibetan but instead speak Tianzhu Chinese dialect at home.

#### V. EDUCATION

In Bde chen Village, approximately ninety percent of elder villagers are illiterate; literate people are elder men who were monks when they were young but now have wives and families. Among younger villagers under twenty, approximately twenty percent are now studying: the village has three university students (two boys and one girl), six high school students (four boys and two girls), seven middle school students (three boys and four girls), and nine primary school students (six boys and three girls).

Three university students graduated in 2007. One girl and one boy graduated from Northwest Minorities University in Lanzhou, the capital of Gansu Province, and are both teaching

Tibetan in Dpa' ris Nationalities Middle School in the county town. Another boy graduated from Hezuo Teacher's College in Gannan Prefecture but, as of August 2008, was still unemployed.

## VI. SUBSISTENCE

Most villagers in Bde chen practice pastoralism. The grassland is divided on a per-person basis. Each person owns sixty-five *mu*<sup>25</sup> of grassland, and families herd yaks, sheep, and goats. From March to May, the villagers move one hour's walk from their wintering site to a spring pasture, where they live in one-room adobe shelters. Villagers stay at the spring pasture until May, and then they move to the summer pasture, which is about two hour's walk away. From the beginning of June until late August, most inhabitants reside in small huts made of stone and plastic sheeting; each year, herders use stones to make a circular wall, over which they stretch plastic for the roof. At the end of summer, they move to their autumn pastures which are twenty minutes' horse ride away. They live in black yak hair tents until the end of October. Then, they move back to the village for the coldest winter months. Most elderly people and some children live permanently in the winter houses, which are made from adobe (see 'Housing' below).

## VII. INCOME

The primary way people in Bde chen Village earn money is from livestock. Each family owns fifty to 100 sheep and fewer than seventy yaks. Villagers produce butter and cheese and sell livestock to earn money. Villagers earn 300-500 RMB per year selling butter, and cheese. One female yak can be sold for around 800 RMB and a male yak can be sold for 1,500-1,700 RMB. Sheep can be sold for around 500 RMB each. Families mostly sell lambs between summer and autumn for around 250 RMB each. These prices are generally considered reasonable, but, nonetheless, people prefer not to sell livestock often because doing so removes potential breeders that could increase a family's wealth. Families with students must sell livestock in order to pay tuition. However,

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<sup>25</sup> One mu = 0.0667 hectares.



this does not cover the costs of sending a family member to school; other methods of earning income are therefore necessary.

A second way of making money is to leave the village to find work. Adults who are able to work go to dig caterpillar fungus, a kind of rare medical substance. One caterpillar fungus can be sold for around five to seven RMB. People usually go to high altitude areas of Bkra shis phyug lung thang Township far from the village at the beginning of May and come back home in the middle of June. Each person can earn about 6,800 RMB from two months' work. They use this money on daily necessities, such as food and fertilizer for growing grass to be used as winter fodder. Villagers only spend around 1,000 RMB to buy special purchases for Lo sar, such as brick tea, liquor, cigarettes, vegetables, sunflower seeds, and fruits.

## VIII. HOUSING

Until about 1998 all local houses were made of adobe bricks, stone, and poplar wood and one story houses were surrounded by a square-shaped courtyard. Villagers helped each other to design and build such houses. In recent years however, people began hiring Han carpenters from the county town to build houses for them. This new style of house is made from red brick, stone, cement, wood, and red tiles. People think such houses are nice-looking and safe to live in. The front of the house is covered in floor-to-ceiling glass. Inside, it is warm on sunny days. A large *lha kha* is in the main room. A *lha kha* is a square, hollow sleeping platform made of concrete and red bricks; called a *kang* in Chinese. Smoldering straw and sheep and yak dung are put inside the *lha kha* to warm it. Quilts are kept folded on the *lha kha* during the day, covered by embroidered cloths. Most families have plastic posters on their interior walls, depicting such things as landscapes, snow lions, and the Potala Palace in Lha sa. Additional rooms are elder family member's bedrooms and a kitchen with a small store room.

## IX. CLOTHING

Bde chen villagers wear the same clothes that other Chinese people wear every day. On special occasions some people wear such Tibetan clothing as sheep-skin and silk robes, and fox-fur hats. This might be done during a wedding, when meeting a lama, or when renewing the *lab rtse*. Recently, however, a lama's teaching resulted in animal skins no longer being worn. Most families took off the otter skin from their robes and burnt them or threw them away. They put fake otter skins or *phrug* (felt) on the edge of robes. A few families still kept and wore their otter skins.

## PART TWO: LO SAR

### I. SHOPPING

Most A mdo areas follow the Chinese lunar calendar for such ceremonies as Lo sar, which is celebrated from the first to the fifteenth day of the first Chinese lunar month in Bde chen Village. This period is called *rgya lo* 'Chinese year'.

Villagers spend at least one month preparing for Lo sar. They usually go to the county town to purchase *kha btags*, liquor, cigarettes, tea bricks, vegetables, candy, fireworks, and clothes for children. Elders do not buy new clothes for themselves; they still wear their old clothes during Lo sar because they do not want to spend money on clothes. Instead, they prefer to focus on food. There are no specific dates for shopping; it depends on the individual.

The amount of *kha btags*, tea bricks, and liquor bought depends on the number of relatives and families who will be visited. Different standards apply when visiting relatives and friends. For example, when visiting a neighbor's house one bottle of liquor, a tea brick, and a *kha btags* are brought. When visiting a close relative's house, it is also necessary to bring some gifts for family elders. *Huajuan*<sup>26</sup> and *kha btags* are indispensable gifts

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<sup>26</sup> *Huajuan* is a kind of bread made during the New Year. *Huajuan* is the Chinese name, but in Tibetan it is called *jongdok* (a local Tibetan term with no literary equivalent). The reason it is called by its Chinese name is because the skills used to make it were

when visiting. Guests are offered barley liquor made in Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County, Gansu Province.

## II. HOUSE-CLEANING

Villagers designate the eighteenth and nineteenth of the twelfth lunar month to clean houses. At first, people move desks, TV sets, sofas, stools, and bedding out of the house, and then use a broom to sweep ceilings, walls, and floors. All refuse is thrown away at a cross-road, eliminating diseases and filth from the house. Blankets, rugs, and felt are spread out on the ice or snow and hit with long, thin willow branches, in order to beat out dust. Then, people clean the chimney by taking it down, putting small stones inside it and rolling it back and forth many times. Another way to clean the chimney is to wind fabric around a long piece of bamboo, which is put inside the chimney and twisted. When the house cleaning is finished, the female head of the house burns conifer needles in the courtyard. She makes a fire in a metal basin and puts it on the ground, letting smoke waft into the rooms. Then all the furniture is moved back into the house.

Women do the cleaning on these two days. Men never do the cleaning; if a man cleans, people will laugh at his wife and call her lazy and incapable. Men will, however, tidy up the shrine. As stated before, people consider women's bodies to be unclean, so they are not fit for such work.

## III. BREAD

In the middle of the twelfth lunar month, women begin to make bread. They make four different types of bread: *huajuan*, *mantou*, *you tiao* (fried bread), and *songhor*.<sup>27</sup>

Steaming bread in the *tulong*<sup>28</sup> takes one and a half hours. In the past, women steamed bread in a big pot, which could steam

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transferred from Chinese women after they migrated to the village.

<sup>27</sup> This local term has no written form.

<sup>28</sup> In modern standard Chinese, *zhenglong*, circular bamboo steamer with seven layers. Each layer can contain seven *huajuan* and so can steam forty-nine *huajuan* at one time.

fourteen *huajuan* at once. After *tulong* became available in the county town, villagers bought them, as they save time and fuel. *Tulong* are mostly sold by Han Chinese in the county town. People typically spend eighty RMB to buy a new *tulong*. It can be used for many years, depending on how well it is taken care of. *Songhor* is baked in a flat pot. *Mantou* is a white bread bun, which is also steamed in a *tulong*.

*Huajuan* and fried bread are only made on such special days as New Year, or when guests come. To make *huajuan*, women first put a little barley flour in a bowl, add soda and baking powder, and then mix them with cold, boiled water to make dough, because cold water will not scald the flour. A household female adds flour twice a day for a month. When the dough begins to ferment and cannot be contained by the bowl, the dough is moved into a basin and put on the *lha kha*, to encourage further fermentation.

Women help each other make *huajuan*. One woman kneads the dough, while two others make the bread. They cut the dough into fist-sized pieces, which are rolled into a flat disk with a rolling pin. Then, oil is spread on the dough and *xiangdou* (a kind of green plant), *jianghuang* (a kind of yellow powder), and *hongqu* (a kind of red powder) are sprinkled on each rolled piece of dough. Then, three pieces of dough, each of a different color, are folded together and cut into pieces. Hands are used to make such shapes as flowers from the tri-colored dough. Sometimes the shapes are all the same, but the colors are different. A big piece of plastic is spread on the *lha kha* and the *huajuan* is put on it for fifteen minutes to allow it to ferment. In this time women will set a big pot on the stove, pour water into it, and set the *tulong* on the pot above the water. A fire is then made in the stove and after the water boils, the *huajuan* are steamed. It takes three hours to finish steaming the bread, after which women decorate it using a small round log with a *g.yung drung* 'swastika' and flowers carved onto the ends. The ends are then dipped in water colored red by paper and then stamped onto the bread.

Families mostly fry bread at night, rather than during the daytime, because they want to avoid people coming to the home while bread is fried, because if this happens, the oil will spill out of the pot, and the bread's color will not be good; it will become white. Well-fried bread is dark yellow. Sometimes people also use

dough to make birds or frogs that are put on the edge of the pot in order to protect the oil and reduce the amount of oil needed. Children add fuel to the stove while women fry the bread.

#### IV. TWO DAYS BEFORE LO SAR

Most families make yak meatballs, dumplings, and steamed buns two days before Lo sar.

To make dumplings, dough is chopped into chunks the size of a child's fist and then barley flour is spread on a chopping board to prevent the dough sticking to it. Yak meat is chopped and mixed with diced onions and chili. A rolling pin is used to roll out small pieces of dough and chopsticks are used to put the meat mixture in the dough. Then, fingers are used to pinch dough together at the top.

Making meatballs is similar to making dumplings, but the balls are not covered in dough. After the meatball is made, oil is poured into a pan and the meat is fried.

This food is stored in a refrigerator; most people now have such convenient appliances. In the past, people hung a wood shelf on the wall to put meat and other prepared food on it. Otherwise, cats or dogs would steal it.

#### V. ONE DAY BEFORE LO SAR

In the morning, men change *ma Ni* flags in the courtyards of their homes, and offer *bsang* on the roof of the house. Following this, water bowls are changed and oil lamps are lit in the shrine. Candy and fruit are also offered. In addition, a willow branch is cut and Chinese dates are impaled on the branch's ends. The decorated branch is placed in front of the deities, as people want deities to celebrate Lo sar with them. Women clean dirty sheets and spread new sheets out in the bedroom on this day.

All family members are supposed to visit their ancestral grave but, since women are so busy, only men and children go. On average, a family takes two or three hours to visit their ancestral grave; they put candies, cigarettes, bread, and milk in front of the grave and prostrate three times before returning home.

Young girls cut red paper into such patterns as birds, stars, and flowers, and then paste them on doors and windows. There is a legend that the New Year was once a monster that always unexpectedly attacked and ate people and livestock. Finally, people discovered this monster was afraid of the color red and used red to defeat it. Red paper commemorates how they defeated the monster of New Year. Some families paste Tibetan or Chinese couplets beside the gate to bring good luck in the coming year.

Women boil dried beef and mutton to be eaten at night. They also have to cook noodles on Lo sar Eve. The noodles, called *dgu thug*, are made from nine ingredients, such as meat, potato, carrot, water, salt, pepper, cabbage, mushroom, and shallot. In the past it was difficult to find nine ingredients to cook with, but now, as people lead a better life than before, it is not a problem for them to find such ingredients. Everyone has to eat some noodles even if they are full. Eating *dgu thug* confers a long life and indicates that the family will stay together.

Men make different shaped cakes of cheese, called *thud*, on this day. They pour cold water in a basin and then put butter in it. They wash their hands with hot water to avoid the butter sticking to their hands, and then squeeze the butter until there is no milk in it. Next, they mix it with mashed cheese, add brown sugar and raisins, and mix these ingredients together and form the mixture into cubes. A knife is used to draw *g.yung drung* on the surface of *thud*. The rest of the butter is used to make the *phyé mar*, which symbolizes good luck. First a bowl decorated with two dragons holding auspicious jewels is filled with *rtsam pa* flour and then butter flowers are placed on top of the heaped *rtsam pa*. *Phyé mar* is only offered on special occasions, such as during Lo sar or when a lama visits.

After two p.m. children or women sweep the courtyard and fetch sufficient water for the next day, because a proscription forbids the carrying of empty containers on the first day of Lo sar. Local people also do not comb their hair, or sew and mend clothes on the first day, as doing so indicates that one will have to work all one's life. Some family members drive tractors or carry ice from the spring. They break ice, which is luminescent in the sunshine, into pieces and put them on the courtyard walls. If there is no ice on a family's courtyard walls it means an immediate family member or an elder relative passed away. They will not celebrate

Lo sar. Mourning lasts for a total of 365 days from the day of death. Mourners will not visit other families during Lo sar, but other families will visit them. Other families have to bring fried bread, because this family may not celebrate Lo sar. They will not say, "*Lo sar bzang*" Happy New Year!" to each other. They will not make fried bread; only *huajuan* and *mantou*.

By nightfall, people have mostly finished their work and begin to dress up. They wash their hair one at a time, and then pour the used water on a cross-road, to drive filth and disease from their bodies. After finishing washing, they start to eat dumplings, meat, and noodles. When the main meal is complete, family members enjoy candies, oranges, apples, and sun-flower seeds that were previously purchased in the county town. They also watch Lo sar Eve entertainment on Qinghai Tibetan Television. At twelve o'clock people make a bonfire at the village entrance gate and put conifer needles in the fire. This is believed to drive out evils and disease from the village. All villagers jump over the bonfire and chant *ma Ni*. Many years ago, people stayed at the bonfire until the beginning of the New Year, at midnight, but nowadays, people return home and go to sleep at around eleven o'clock, and get up at three or four o'clock to offer *bsang* at the *lab rtse*.

## VI. THE FIRST DAY OF LO SAR

After getting up at around three or four a.m. all family members make an offering fire on the roof of their house. Men blow conch shells repeatedly. Villagers dress in new clothes and go to the shrine to light lamps and prostrate to the images. Then young people prostrate in front of elders. Family members walk in different directions from the yard, moving in directions prescribed by a zodiac almanac according to their birth year. They then return and wish each other a happy New Year, saying, "*Lo sar bzang*," to one another.

On the first day of Lo sar, each family consecrates a new *tshe thar* for the mountain god; they free a yak or a sheep from man-caused death. One person holds the yak or sheep tightly and another one ties a piece of silk on the left shoulder of the animal and purifies it with water into which a little milk has been poured. This milk water is poured on the animal's head and then down its

back to its tail. Conifer needles are burned on a metal shovel and put beside the yak or sheep in order to purify its body. Then a piece of butter is pasted on the horns. This is thought to prevent illness coming to family members and disasters coming to livestock and the grasslands.

After doing this, it is already ten o'clock. People eat a large breakfast together. They prepare *rtsam pa*, *thud*, and bread. However, immediately before this they hold dragon-decorated bowls of milk tea in their hands and chant Skyabs 'gro, then hand *phye mar* to each other in order to transmit good luck.

After finishing breakfast, family members offer *bsang* and then circumambulate the village stupa together as a family. After finishing these rituals, visitations begin. People first visit their close relatives and then visit their neighbors and friends. Children are busy visiting families in the village. They play with their friends and eat food. Adults chat with one another and sing drinking songs. When adults or children are leaving, the female head of the family gives a pair of socks to boys, and girls are given a scarf, and children's pockets are filled with candies.

#### Folk song 1.

- <sup>1</sup> Bla ma dgos no slob ma
- <sup>2</sup> Slob ma dgos no yon tan
- <sup>3</sup> Yon tan yod na bla ma skyid
- <sup>4</sup> Dpon po dgos no blon po red
- <sup>5</sup> Blon po dgos no yig rtsal red
- <sup>6</sup> 'di yig rtsal bzang na dpon po skyid
- <sup>7</sup> Yul pha ma dgos no bu phrug red
- <sup>8</sup> Bu rang la dgos no gus bkur red
- <sup>9</sup> Bu gus bkur che na pha ma skyid
- <sup>10</sup> Da len no ma red skyid lo red

- <sup>1</sup> Teachers need students,
- <sup>2</sup> Students need knowledge,
- <sup>3</sup> The teacher is happy when the student is knowledgeable.
- <sup>4</sup> Leaders need ministers,
- <sup>5</sup> Minister needs strategies,
- <sup>6</sup> The leader is happy when the minister has strategies.
- <sup>7</sup> Parents need children,



- <sup>8</sup> Children should respect their parents,  
<sup>9</sup> Parents are happy if their children respect them.  
<sup>10</sup> I do not think I sing very well, but this is a happy time.

## Folk Song 2.

- <sup>1</sup> Zas dkar gsum phud gi dang bo 'di  
<sup>2</sup> Skyabs bla ma dkon mchog gsum po mchod  
<sup>3</sup> Ja g.yang dmar kha gi khu zhag 'di  
<sup>4</sup> Nang zhwa gser bstan pai' bla ma mchod  
<sup>5</sup> Chang ra khyi kha gi smug chang 'di  
<sup>6</sup> Nang khrom pa'i yid bzhin nor bu mchod

- <sup>1</sup> When having delicious food, first  
<sup>2</sup> Offer to the Three Precious Jewels and the lama.  
<sup>3</sup> When you offer auspicious butter tea,  
<sup>4</sup> Offer it to the lama.  
<sup>5</sup> When offering pungent frothy alcohol,  
<sup>6</sup> Offer it to whomever you consider important.

PERSONAL ACCOUNT. On the first day of Lo sar, my brother and I visited my paternal grandparents' family. It is important to visit elder family members early in the morning; they do not appreciate being visited after about three p.m. If you do not visit early, they will think you do not respect them and you are not treating them like a relative.

We brought a tea brick, a bottle of barley liquor that had a piece of sheep's wool around its neck, a bag of crystallized sugar, a *kha btags*, and two *huajuan*. My brother and I prostrated three times to our grandparents after we gave gifts to them. Grandfather gave five RMB to each of us and grandmother gave us each a plastic bag filled with candies, sun-flower seeds, and peanuts. My aunt and her daughter brought milk tea for us. They displayed eight or ten dishes of fruits, candies, sunflower seeds, bread, *thud*, and peanuts on the desk. They brought two plates of dried beef and mutton, and four plates of vegetables. My aunt and her daughter served tea persistently to show their hospitality. My uncle served barley liquor to other visitors who came at the time including women, but not children. Usually, local people start drinking in their late twenties, and generally, they drink three

cups of liquor, one after the other. Males and females use the right ring finger to flick liquor skyward three times before drinking it. Women will drink but not as much as men. Men sit on the *lha kha* and women sit on sofas or chairs around the stove. After drinking a little, men and women sing drinking songs. Children set off fireworks in the courtyard.

## VII. THE SECOND TO NINTH DAY OF LO SAR

People continue busily visiting each other. Women who married into other families in distant villages or even in other counties return home at this time. Also, a few weddings are held in the village. Weddings are held in winter time, because all people are gathered together in the winter houses, and have free time. During weddings, people gossip about their life and village affairs.

It takes four days to finish a wedding. On the first day, the hosts treat a few selected people who will help them on the following days with abundant food. On the second day, these people prepare food and decorate the new bride's room all day. On the third day, the bride and about twenty of her male relatives and one female relative come to the groom's home. The bride wears a new Tibetan robe and covers her face with a veil. In front of the groom's gate, a pile of straw is lit on fire, over which the bride and her relatives jump before entering the gate, in order to drive evil things from them. At the gate, a monk chants scripture and pours consecrated water from a dragon-decorated bowl into the guest's palms. The guests drink half of it and pour the other half onto their heads. Members of the groom's family and the bride's family sing competitive antiphonal songs; the side with the most songs is the winner. The fourth day is the final day. The new couple and the bride's relatives go back to the bride's home. The new couple will stay three days in the bride's home, in order to allow the groom to visit the bride's relatives.

## VIII. THE TENTH DAY OF LO SAR

On the tenth day of Lo sar, old villagers dress in their best robes and young people wear Chinese clothes. Most villagers gather in

the village meeting hall to chant *ma Ni* all day. Villagers also go to the stupa to prostrate, burn *bsang* and tie *kha btags* on the stupa. After finishing these activities, they enter the meeting hall and start to chant. They chant *ma Ni* and Skyabs 'gro from six a.m. to seven p.m., resting only at lunch time. They cannot eat garlic and meat starting from one day before. At the end of the day, a male villager leads people to sing *ma Ni*. He sings a line of *ma Ni*, which would normally be chanted, and then the gathered people respond, imitating the melody. This process is repeated for about half an hour. After finishing their chant, villagers drive their livestock into their pens and go to bed. Although Lo sar continues until the fifteenth day, no more special activities occur and no more visitations are made.

## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

- Bao'an zu 保安族 Bao'an
- Bde chen བདེ་ཆེན། \*place
- Blo bzang rgya mtsho ལྷོ་བཟང་རྒྱ་མཚོ། \*person
- byang chub* བྱང་ཆུབ། \*stupa's name
- chang glu* ཆང་གུ། drinking song
- Chos kyi rdo rje ཆོས་ཀྱི་རྩ་རྒྱལ། \*person
- dgu thug* དགུ་ཐུག། noodles with nine ingredients
- Dongxiang zu 东乡族 Dongxiang
- Dpa' ris དཔའ་རིས། \*place
- g.yung drung* གཡུང་རྩུང། swastika
- Gannan 甘南 \*place
- Gansu 甘肃 \*place
- Ge sar གེ་སར། \*person
- Hanzu 汉族 Han
- Hezuo 合作 \*place
- huajuan* 花卷 steamed bread
- huangqu* 黄曲 red powder
- Huazang si 华藏寺 \*place
- Huizu 回族 Hui
- Jag lung ཇག་ལུང། \*place
- jianghuang* 姜黄 a kind of yellow powder
- kang* 炕 adobe bed
- kha btags* ཁ་བཏགས། silk scarf
- la gzhas* ལ་གཞས། love song
- lab rtse* ལབ་རྩེ། mountain deity altar
- Lanzhou 兰州 \*place
- lha kha* ལྷ་ཁ་ཁྲོ་སྒྲུབ། adobe bed
- lha rta* ལྷ་རྩ། god horse
- lo sar bzang* ལོ་སར་བཟང། Happy New Year

*ma Ni* མ་ནི། the six sacred syllables  
*mantou* 馒头 bun  
 Manzu 满族 Man  
 Mao Zedong 毛泽东 \*name  
*mchod khang* མཚོད་ཁང་། shrine  
 Miaozi 苗族 Miao  
*mu* 亩 0.666 hectares  
*phye mar* ཕྱེ་མར། a special Lo sar food  
 Phyug lung ཕྱུག་ལུང་། \*place  
 Rab gyas dgon pa རབ་གྱལ་དགོན་པ། \*monastery  
*rgya lo* ལྷ་ལོ། Chinese year  
*rlung rta* ལུང་རྟ། wind horse  
 Salazu 撒拉族 Salar  
 Skyabs 'gro སྐྱམས་འགྲོ། refuge  
*sram* སྐྱམ། otter skin  
 Stod glu ལྷོད་གུ། praise song  
*thang* ཐང་། soup  
*thud* ཐུད། cake of cheese  
 Tianzhu 天祝 \*place  
*tshe thar* ཚེ་ཐར། animal freed from human caused death  
 Tuzu 土族 Monguor  
 Weiwu'erzu 维吾尔族 Uyghur  
*xiangdou* 香豆 a green plant  
*youtiao* 油条 fried bread  
 Yuguzu 裕固族 Yugur  
*zhenglong / tulong* (oral) 蒸笼 steamer  
 Zhuangzu 壮族 Zhuang

WRITE NEW VOCABULARY HERE

WRITE YOUR EVALUATION HERE

## VOCABULARY

Ask these questions to a partner.

1. Which of these can waft: a dog, a smell, smoke, food, an idea.
2. How much tuition do you need to pay now?
3. How high above sea level is Xining? How high above sea level is Lha sa?
4. Have you ever made a sacrificial fire? Why? What did it look like?
5. Have you ever seen a person possessed by a ghost or god? Tell me about it.
6. Which of these words means the same as pastoralism: farming, herding, agriculture, livestock, livelihood.
7. Do you know a knowledgeable person? Tell me about her or him.
8. Who were the first inhabitants of your village?
9. Are there any fortune-tellers in your village? Have you ever visited a fortune-teller?
10. When do you dress up? What do you wear when you dress up?
11. Who are the elderly people in your family?
12. Do people ever do competitive antiphonal singing in your village? Tell me about it.

## WYLIE

Write the Tibetan for these words, then check in your book.

chang glu	phye mar
Rab rgyas dgon pa	mchod khang
Skyabs 'gro	tshe thar
byang chub	dgu thug
g.yung drung	kha btags
la gzhas	lab rtse
lha rta	mchod khang



## CONTENT

1. Where is Bde chen? How is it similar or different to Rtsi gzhung thang?
2. Tell me about the local *la tse* and *mchod khang*.
3. Tell me about the 'god horse'.
4. What is subsistence? What is income? What do villagers do for their subsistence? What do they do for income?
5. Compared to your village, is Bde chen poor or rich?
6. What shopping do people do before Lo sar?
7. How do people clean their house before Lo sar?
8. What do you think is the most interesting thing about the Lo sar preparations?
9. Tell me about the folk songs.
10. What does the author describe in the personal account?
11. What happens between the tenth and ninth days of Lo sar?
12. When is the last day of Lo sar in Bde chen? What happens on that day?

## EXERCISES

Do these exercises, then check your answers in the text.

*eat go enter wear drive continue sing dress chant gather  
lead respond occur*

On the tenth day of Lo sar, old villagers \_\_\_\_\_ in their best robes and young people \_\_\_\_\_ Chinese clothes. Most villagers \_\_\_\_\_ in the village meeting hall to chant *ma Ni* all day. Villagers also go to the stupa to prostrate, burn *bsang* and tie *kha btags* on the stupa. After finishing these activities, they \_\_\_\_\_ the meeting hall and start to chant. They \_\_\_\_\_ *ma Ni* and Skyabs 'gro from six a.m. to seven p.m., resting only at lunch time. They cannot \_\_\_\_\_ garlic and meat starting from one day before. At the end of the day, a male villager \_\_\_\_\_s people to sing *ma Ni*. He \_\_\_\_\_s a line of *ma Ni*, which would normally be chanted, and then the gathered people \_\_\_\_\_, imitating the melody. This process is repeated for about half an hour. After finishing their chant, villagers \_\_\_\_\_ their livestock into their pens and \_\_\_\_\_ to bed. Although Lo sar \_\_\_\_\_s until the fifteenth day, no more special activities \_\_\_\_\_ and no more visitations are made.

*a the an*

Most villagers in Bde chen practice pastoralism. The grassland is divided on \_\_\_\_\_ per-person basis. Each person owns sixty-five *mu* of grassland, and families herd yaks, sheep, and goats. From March to May, \_\_\_\_\_ villagers move one hour's walk from their wintering site to \_\_\_\_\_ spring pasture, where they live in one-room adobe shelters. Villagers stay at \_\_\_\_\_ spring pasture until May, and then they move to \_\_\_\_\_ summer pasture, which is about two hour's walk away. From \_\_\_\_\_ beginning of June until late August, most inhabitants reside in small huts made of stone and plastic sheeting; each year, herders use stones to make \_\_\_\_\_ circular wall, over which they stretch plastic for \_\_\_\_\_ roof. At \_\_\_\_\_ end of summer, they move to their autumn pastures which are twenty minutes' horse ride away. They live in black yak hair tents until \_\_\_\_\_ end of October. Then, they move back to \_\_\_\_\_ village for the coldest winter months. Most elderly people and some children live permanently in \_\_\_\_\_ winter houses, which are made from adobe.

*in other every own in front of*

\_\_\_\_\_ household has their \_\_\_\_\_ *mchod khang* 'shrine' which is separate from \_\_\_\_\_ rooms. They set pictures of lamas \_\_\_\_\_ the shrine, \_\_\_\_\_ which rapeseed oil lamps are lit \_\_\_\_\_ morning. Seven small copper bowls are filled with clean water and set \_\_\_\_\_ the shrine by the men or women, depending on who has time. The water \_\_\_\_\_ these bowls is changed \_\_\_\_\_ morning and butter lamps are lit \_\_\_\_\_ Buddha images. Either a woman or man offers *bsang* \_\_\_\_\_ day \_\_\_\_\_ the family courtyard.

To make dumplings, dough is (chops/chopped/chop) into chunks the size of a child's fist and then barley flour is (spreads/spreading/spread) on a chopping board to (prevent/prevents) the dough sticking to it. Yak meat is (chopped/chop) and mixed with diced onions and chili. A rolling pin is (use/uses/used) to roll out small pieces of dough and chopsticks are (uses/used) to put the meat mixture in the dough. Then, fingers are (uses/used) to pinch dough together at the top.

MODERN AMDO TIBETAN LO SAR CELEBRATIONS IN ME  
TOG LUNG BA  
Rin chen skyid

PART ONE: VILLAGE LIFE IN ME TOG LIFE

I. VILLAGE NAME

Me tog lung ba literally means 'flower valley'. Long ago, a goddess was sent to the earth to collect flower seeds for A ne gong ma rgyal mo, the Queen of Heaven. The goddess completed her work in ten days and, on her return to heaven, she flew through a beautiful valley. She was surprised to see small yellow flowers turning the whole valley yellow, and wanted to collect the seeds of these amazing flowers for the queen.

The goddess took some seeds but, just as she was about to fly back to heaven, a storm struck, forcing her to seek shelter. She could not find people to shelter with and became anxious, fearing that her collection of seeds would be destroyed if she did not return immediately to heaven.

The heavy rain drenched her from head to toe. After the storm, the sky turned blue and the sun appeared again. Everything became normal; swallows chirped in the sky and butterflies flitted about. The goddess was unharmed and was very grateful to the mountain deity for protecting her. She prostrated to the highest mountain in the valley and then began drying the wet flower seeds in the bright sunshine.

The flower seeds were almost dry when she heard a loud noise coming closer and closer. She stood, looked around, and saw a wall of floodwater rushing down the valley. She abandoned the seeds and ran up the slope, barely saving herself. The seeds were carried away by the flood.

Later, flowers of every color began to bloom in Me tog lung ba. The same yellow flower that the goddess collected also blooms there and is known as the *gser chen* flower.

When people came to the valley, they saw the upper part of the valley covered with yellow flowers and said, "Let's call this valley 'Me tog lung ba'".

## II. THE FIRST INHABITANTS

In 1885, there was a family who were descendants of the Sa skya clan living in today's Hualong Hui Autonomous County. Due to local unrest in Hualong this family asked for shelter from a landlord in 'Gag pad ma Village near Me tog lung ba. They later came into conflict with the locals and had to leave. While wandering, they reached an uninhabited valley with a favorable climate, and settled there.

In 1889, such other Tibetan clans as Rtsi kyag and Sbrul nag, left Hualong because of endless conflicts with locals and joined the Sa skya group in Me tog lung ba. More people, including Han and Hui, came to this village after liberation.

## III. LOCATION

Me tog lung ba is eight kilometers from Chab cha Town, Gonghe (Chab 'gag) County, capital of Mtsho lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province. The community is located at the foot of Blon po gser chen, the highest mountain between Chab cha Town and Qinghai Lake, with a height of 4,406 meters. Local people worship the deity<sup>29</sup> living in the mountain, who has the same name as the mountain.

## IV. POPULATION

The Me tog lung ba community consists of Me tog lung ba zhol ma Village and Me tog lung ba gong ma Village. There are 148 households (760 residents) in total. Me tog lung ba zhol ma Village has ninety-four households (456 residents); fifteen to twenty households are Han and Hui. Me tog lung ba gong ma Village has fifty-four households (304 residents). Most villagers are illiterate.

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<sup>29</sup> There are several stories about the origin of this deity. Most state that the deity was originally Mgar stong btsan, the minister to the thirty-second Tibetan king Srong btsan sgam po. Some say he was imprisoned in the mountain for disobeying the king, while others say that the minister clashed with enemies and was killed on the mountain.

## V. HUI AND HAN IN THE VILLAGE

There are three Hui families and eighteen Han families in Me tog lung ba zhol ma Village. They came there after Tibetan villagers in Me tog lung ba gong ma refused to let them continue living there. Villagers say that the Han and Hui moved from Gong ma Village and do not know their ancestral homelands. Most Han families are surnamed Dong and Song. Han in Me tog lung ba zhol ma Village follow a Tibetan lifestyle and speak the A mdo Tibetan dialect fluently. They also adhere to Tibetan Buddhism and participate in local religious rituals. During Lo sar, they visit Tibetan families with gifts, as do Tibetans.

The Hui population in the village still practices Islam, but speak fluent A mdo Tibetan and have frequent contact with Tibetan villagers.

## VI. SUBSISTENCE

Me tog lung ba is an agro-pastoral community and is located in a long valley. The upper valley acts as both summer and winter pastures for all of Me tog lung ba's livestock. Every summer, families who have wintered in the village herd livestock to the upper valley, where they stay in small one-room adobe huts. In 1989, a reservoir was built in the upper part of the valley, providing water for the two villages to use for crop irrigation in May and June.

It is about two kilometers from the summer pasture to Me tog lung ba gong ma Village. Only five or six families out of fifty-six herd sheep and yaks in the summer pasture from mid-May to mid-August and about twenty families herd in the winter pastures at the same time.

Villagers cultivate barley, wheat, beans, and rapeseed. Wheat flour is used to make bread and noodles. Beans are used for fodder for pigs and sheep and sometimes sold for cash. Barley is used for *rtsam pa* and offered to deities. Rapeseed is pressed for oil that is used for cooking.

Eighty percent of families in Me tog lung ba gong ma tend livestock. Each family has fifty to 200 sheep and three families have ten to thirty yaks. Each family also has one or two mules,

which are used for plowing in spring. Me tog lung ba zhol ma Village has 2,000 *mu* of fields. Spring starts from the beginning of April and lasts one and a half months. From the end of spring, Me tog lung ba zhol ma Villagers prepare to cultivate crops. This is one month later than other places in northeast Qinghai Province, such as Xunhua County in Mtsho shar (Haidong) Region and Reb gong County in Rma lho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Additionally, winter comes to Me tog lung ba one month earlier than in these areas, beginning in the middle of October.

Summer is short and cool, with little rain. Women spend much of their time weeding in the fields. In early September, the weather becomes hotter; the crops are scorched, and the fields become golden. Me tog lung ba villagers begin their harvest at this time.

The weather from mid-winter to late-spring is often windy, which explains the term *rlung khog*, 'the place where wind originates.'

## VII. RELIGIOUS RITUALS AND FESTIVALS

All local Tibetans and most local Han follow Dge lugs pa Buddhism. The Hui go to neighboring Wu qi Village's mosque for religious activity.

On the fifteenth day of every lunar month, Tibetans go to the nearest monastery, Bkra shis theg chen gling, with offerings of juniper. Officially called Dgon pa so ma, the monastery was built by the third Dalai Lama, Bsod nams rgya mtsho, in 1577, when Mtsho lho was ruled by Mongols. A Mongol king named Altan Khan asked the third Dalai Lama to visit Mtsho lho and explain the Dharma to him. On the way, His Holiness passed through Chab 'gag Valley and, while resting, viewed the valley which, at that time, had few households. Noting that a monastery was nowhere in sight, he asked locals to build a monastery and call it Bkra shis theg chen gling. However, after several years, administrative disorganization resulted in the monastery falling into ruin. In 1902, the landlord of Chab 'gag Valley and some wealthy locals rebuilt the monastery a hundred meters from the original site. They named this new monastery Bkra shis theg chen gling. Destroyed in 1958,

it was rebuilt in the 1980s, when the tenth Pan chen lama visited Mtsho lho. The area of the monastery is about 800 square meters. In 2006, nine stupas arranged in a line were built on the monastery grounds. There were more than seventy monks in this monastery in 2009.

Buddhists demonstrate faith belief by giving charity to the monastery and helping other community members. Homes commonly have one room for a *mchod khang* 'shrine', where deity images and pictures of important Buddhist leaders and practitioners, such as Rje tsong kha pa and the Pan chen lama, are kept. Butter lamps are lit and roasted barley, wheat, or conifer is burnt daily in the shrine as an offering to the family *yul lha* 'protector god', who protects the household from disease, bad luck, and disaster. There is also a *ma Ni khang*, 'village shrine', in which villagers perform such religious activities as *smyang gnas* 'spring fast' and *chos 'khor*.<sup>30</sup>

The biggest local festival is Lab tse chab ril on the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth days of the sixth lunar month. Preparations begin early in the sixth lunar month. Elders explain the origin of the festival as below:

Chab ril<sup>31</sup> was a monk who was very good at chanting mantra and tantra. He drove away many evil forces. After his death, instead of reincarnating as a human, he became a wandering ghost because he was reluctant to leave the world, and stayed behind, unintentionally causing calamities. Normal monks and lamas could not subdue him. Local people could no longer bear his brutality so, a year after his death, locals asked a high lama to conquer Chab ril. The lama established a *lab tse* called Lab tse Chab ril near Bkra shis theg chen gling; its location is called Lab tse chab ril thang. Thus, Chab ril became a protector deity of Chab 'gag Valley.

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<sup>30</sup> *Chos 'khor* is a religious ritual performed in Me tog lung ba zhol ma Village. See below for details.

<sup>31</sup> There are many, sometimes contradictory, stories about Chab ril. Most elders agree he was a very knowledgeable monk from Hualong Ga rgya who became a monk in Bya khyung Monastery. After completing his studies, he had a strong desire to make a pilgrimage to Lha sa. On the way, he planned to establish 108 *lab tse*, and the *lab tse* in Chab 'gag Valley was one of them.

To venerate Chab ril and celebrate the peace he brought to the community, locals annually hold the *lab tse* ceremony. Every sixth lunar month, elders, youths, and children go to the *lab tse* with freshly cut trees and juniper needles as offerings. They perform *lab tse bsdod pa* 'renewing the *lab tse*', and burn juniper needles. The trunks and branches in the *lab tse* are changed, creating a new shelter for Chab ril. Although this practice forms the core of the celebration, the festival has grown larger over the years. An archery competition, tug-of-war contest, dance contest, and love song competition are now also held.

There are several other important religious rituals in Me tog lung ba zhol ma Village in spring, after crops have been planted. This includes the spring fast on the fifteenth day of the fourth lunar month, which aids the harvest. All families, except for the Hui families, send a member to participate. The selected person goes to the village shrine with their bedding and, on the fifteenth day, they only eat at noon and drink milk tea for dinner. The following day, they must not eat, drink, or talk. Chanting is the only sound participants may make. The spring fast lasts for two days; on the third morning a large meal of *rtsam pa*, milk tea, rice, and meat dumplings is enjoyed in the village shrine, after which participants go home.

*Chos 'khor* is held on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month at the village shrine. Each participant brings a very clean cloth to wrap around one or two scripture volumes. Then, led by an elder, they carry these volumes on their backs around the village, including the fields. *Chos 'khor* is thought to increase the amount of food harvested by pleasing the deities, who send rainfall and protect the crops from hail and other disasters.

## VIII. LANGUAGE

Me tog lung ba zhol ma villagers speak their own sub-dialect of A mdo Tibetan. For example, teapot in normal A mdo Tibetan is *ja dam*. A mdo nomads emphasize the final sound, whereas Me tog lung ba farmers give less stress to the final, saying *cha di*. The word 'next year' in Me tog lung ba is pronounced *nyin da*, which has no written form, while nomads say *phyir lo* (pronounced *shin*



lo).

Presently, due to the influence of mass media and frequent communication with monolingual Han, villagers sometimes speak Tibetan mixed with Chinese.

As stated earlier, the Han and Hui in Me tog lung ba speak A mdo Tibetan dialect when communicating with Tibetan villagers. Among themselves, however, they speak Qinghai Chinese dialect.

## PART TWO: LO SAR

### I. SLAUGHTERING SHEEP AND PIGS

About one and a half months before Lo sar, families slaughter pigs and sheep to have enough meat to eat in winter. On average, each family slaughters two pigs and two sheep a year. If a family does not herd sheep, they buy one or two sheep to slaughter if they have the cash. A sheep cost 300 RMB in 2009.

Men kill pigs and sheep. Five or six neighbors help a family to slaughter pigs and sheep. After the slaughtering, relatives are invited to dine with the family, who sends *sha ska*, 'a share', of the meat to relatives' homes.

Slaughtering animals is a sinful but necessary activity. Before slaughtering animals, families light two butter lamps in the shrine and elder women or men chant there for a while, opening a bright road to the afterlife for the dying pigs.

### II. DEEP-FRIED BREAD

Twenty days before Lo sar, families begin making fried bread. Five or six women gather in a home to help cook this. They take turns helping each other. Men usually do not participate in food preparation, as it is considered women's work. *Go dmar*, *sog sog*, *dgyus ris ma* (*mahua*), and *di rik* (this oral term has no written form) are deep-fried breads. Each demands a certain set of skills to prepare. The first piece of bread is taken to the shrine as an offering to the family's protector deity.

### III. HOUSE CLEANING DAY AND *THAB KA TSE TSE*

The nineteenth day of the twelfth lunar month is house cleaning day in Me tog lung ba. At about eight a.m., after livestock have been sent out, the family moves bedding, chairs, and tables into the courtyard. Adults wearing surgical face masks, gloves, and old clothes clean the sitting room and kitchen with a short broom; every corner must be thoroughly cleaned. Next, juniper needles are burned inside the house to purify it and the house is swept again with a new broom. It takes three to four hours to finish cleaning. Children polish tables, water vats, and cooking utensils in the courtyard and also use sticks to beat dust from rugs. Mothers customarily discard the garbage behind hills or in ditches, because the garbage from that day is considered very unclean and people do not want others to see it. At the end of the day, each family's housewife cooks a delicious dinner for the family to celebrate the completion of the cleaning. The meal is called *dgu thug* and features pork and *gro tsag* (made of wheat and cooked in meat broth).

The family stove is renewed before dinner on the twenty-third day of the twelfth lunar month, which is called *thab ka tse tse* (no written form). Stoves are usually rectangular, made of adobe, and large enough to accommodate two medium pots. The *tsha thab* 'sleeping platform', is behind the stove. A flat piece of wood separates the *tsha thab* and stove from each other. The chimney passes through the *tsha thab* and, when food is cooked on the stove, the *tsha thab* will also be heated by the smoke and fire from the stove. Elders say there is a *thab lha*, 'stove deity', in every home and, therefore, you must not step on the stove. When cleaning the house, garbage cannot be put in the stove, because this annoys the stove deity. The housewife puts fruits and candies in china dishes on the stove after dinner, and two butter lamps on the stove are lit. *Thab lha* influences the quantity and quality of food a family has, thus respecting this deity is important.

### IV. PURCHASING LO SAR GIFTS

As Lo sar approaches, villagers prepare cash to purchase goods from town. Some poor families borrow money from wealthy

families, while others sell livestock to obtain the necessary cash.

New robes and other new clothes are needed during Lo sar. Parents buy new clothes for young children, while older family members buy clothes for themselves. The senior men and women of each household go to Chab cha Town to purchase candies, fruits, peanuts, sunflower seeds, and raisins. New rugs are sometimes bought at this time. Clothes worn during Lo sar are generally the most expensive purchase. Liquor and honey are given to elders and colorful headbands are given to young women and girls. In 2009, each family spent about 500 RMB on snacks, 700 RMB on Lo sar gifts, and about 1,000 RMB on clothes and miscellaneous Lo sar expenses.

## V. VISITING *A MCHOD* AND FAMILY TOMBS

*A mchod* are knowledgeable, venerated monks who chant *Smon lam*, 'good wishes', after a death. *A mchod* should be treated as relatives, and given food and gifts. For example, after my grandparents passed away, my family and my uncle's family began visiting my grandparents' *A mchod* during every local festival. Though fifteen years has passed, we continue to send food and other gifts to our *A mchod*, especially one or two days before Lo sar.

Villagers visit their *A mchod* and take conifer needles, fruits, candies, and new liquor to their ancestors' tombs. In my family, my father and brother visit our grandparents' tomb to ensure that no rats have made holes around it. Completeness of the tomb is very significant and shows respect to the deceased. Peace and a lack of disturbances are also very important. Villagers believe that choosing an auspicious location for ancestors' tombs brings wealth and prosperity to future generations. Descendants prostrate and chant *Om mani padme hum* near the grave for half an hour.

## VI. *DAR MCHOD*

*Dar mchod*, 'ice offerings', refract light, symbolizing thousands of offerings for Lo sar. On the morning of the final day of the old

year, male villagers go to frozen rivers and pools, dig out ice, and take bags of it to home by cart. At sunset, ice chunks are placed around the courtyard walls and in high places outside the house. Lack of ice signifies a recent death in the family. Families in mourning do not celebrate Lo sar. Firecrackers are set off after making *dar mchod*, announcing the beginning of Lo sar.

## VI. LO SAR EVE (*GNAM GANG*)

From the beginning of the twelfth lunar month, firecrackers are purchased and children sporadically set them off. The explosions reach a crescendo on Lo sar eve. *Gnam gang* is the twenty-ninth of the twelfth lunar month, the last day of the old year and dinner on this night is called *dgu thug*. Villagers busily prepare for Lo sar on the twenty-ninth. Men and boys clean the courtyard, return borrowed tools to owners, and seek the return of the family's lent items. Tools that are not returned before Lo sar are thought to thereafter stay with the borrower. Women and girls are busy inside the house cleaning, making dumplings, and steaming pork and mutton.

At five p.m., after finishing making *dar mchod*, the immediate family and close relatives gather together for a sumptuous feast. Dumplings, pork, pig's head, and mutton are steamed for dinner. Children are told to eat until full, otherwise Gshin rje chos rgyal 'the Master of Hell' will punish them; the exact contents of this threat are vague. Children are also told not to quarrel and fight with siblings, or else they will quarrel and fight the whole next year.

Sunflower seeds, peanuts, fruits, and candies are nibbled on after dinner. Afterwards, relatives return home and sleep until midnight.

## VII. LO SAR VISITS

Men and boys burn a larger-than-normal wheat offering on the household roof where a *bsang khri*<sup>32</sup> is placed, and set off

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<sup>32</sup> The *bsang khri* is a place where the family burn wheat and juniper needles as offerings to the deities. On the first morning of

firecrackers before visiting relatives, at about twelve a.m. On the first morning of Lo sar, Women make milk tea, clean the house, and prepare to welcome guests. Butter lamps are offered in front of the Buddha images in the shrine, where family members prostrate and make wishes for the New Year.

At around two a.m., visiting begins in the village. Visiting elders first shows respect. Two bottles of liquor, a tea brick, and other gifts may be given to relatives. Children go in groups from one home to another, receiving candy and other Lo sar gifts such as one RMB notes and apples. When visiting, young adults take a bottle of liquor and such soft drinks as Pepsi, and prostrate three times to elders. In turn elders might say:

1. lo gsar ba'i nang du,
2. bsam don thams cad yid bzhin 'grub ba,
3. las la nad med tshe ring lo brgya 'bud la'o

1. In the New Year,
2. (You) will achieve everything you want;
3. (You) will be without illness, and live a hundred years.

The elders give different wishes to students, official workers, and other village youths. Visitors stay in a home for a cup of milk tea and a dumpling or two after prostrating, then leave. Visiting many homes and eating and drinking at each is challenging.

Before visiting a home, men, women, and children shout "Lo sar *bzang*!"<sup>33</sup> together in the courtyard or at the gate, and the family that is being visited replies, "*Bzang bzang bzang*!" Visitors do not enter a courtyard until someone comes out of the house and responds. If the visited family ignores guests, they are scolded with other calls; for example, "Your family is not hospitable," or, "I was not welcomed here."

Visiting finishes and people go home at dawn. Children return with bags of candies, and some adult males are drunk.

Distant relatives visit after dawn. Returning a visit is necessary and these must be paid during Lo sar. Gifts given are of the same value as those received. If a family is large, visiting all

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Lo sar, villagers burn offerings on the roofs of their houses where they place a stone slab to use as a *bsang khri*.

<sup>33</sup> "Happy New Year!"

the neighboring villages is possible if each family member visits two villages. In this way, visiting can be completed in two days. Motorcycles are now often used when visiting whereas, in the 1980s and earlier, donkeys, mules, and horses were used. Very few families use cars to visit.

## VIII. HAIR CHANGING AND MARRIAGE

At least one girl changes her status from that of a girl to that of a woman annually. When a girl is seventeen to nineteen years old, her family designs a new Tibetan robe with an ornament (*tse ri* – this oral term has no written form) covered in embroidered panels. During Lo sar, especially on the third day, relatives are invited to the home to celebrate *skra phud pa*, 'the girl's hair changing day'. The girl must wear a Tibetan robe the entire day. Most hair changing rituals happen during Lo sar, but certain families hold it during other local festivals such as the *lab tsi* festival. If a girl's wedding is held when she is seventeen, the hair changing ceremony is completed at the same time. Thus, at her wedding party, she simultaneously becomes a woman and her husband's wife.

Now, hair changing practices have changed. More girls attend school, and hair changing celebrations are increasingly ignored. Some students consider such rituals unnecessary. In the late 1990s, when a boy turned eighteen, the family arranged a bride of sixteen or seventeen for him. Now, however, girls marry when they are in their twenties, and boys do the same. The hair-changing ritual has lost importance and is held less often.

## IX. ARCHERY

A four-day archery competition is held beginning on the third or fifth day of Lo sar. Before the competition, males gather and burn wheat offerings in the village shrine and elders ask the mountain deity, Blon po gser chen, for victory. On the morning of the archery competition, males assemble in an empty field. Women stay outside the field and watch the men. They do not participate.

When the competing village (a different village is chosen

every year) reaches Me tog lung ba zhol ma Village, the participants make two pyramid-shaped targets of piled earth. One is in the east and the other is in the west. The two targets are separated by a distance of about 100 meters. The archery competition begins after targets are made. The two villages' *mda' dpon*, 'archery leaders', lead their groups, circumambulating their individual target three times while stamping their feet and yelling, "*Ke! Ke!*" and ending with the shouting of, "*Sku ra*, partner!" The ceremony closes with the men crying out, "*Lha rgyal lo!* Victory to the gods!"

Each archery competitor has a *sku ra* from the opposing village. When one's *sku ra* hits right on the target, his village group runs to the target, shouting, "*Lha rgyal lo!*" to thank the mountain deity. If that man's partner cannot match the feat, he is embarrassed. Young children stamp their feet, wave their hands, and shout:

1. phed phed,
2. kha sa rgyob,
3. og sha rdo la rgyob

1. Fail, fail!
2. Hit your mouth on the ground,
3. Hit your butt on a rock

Two days are spent in one village and two days in the other village. After one and a half days of competing in one village, men and women gather in the open field. A singing competition is held that includes modern and traditional songs and dances.

If an elder has died, their family members do not participate in the competition. The competition is cancelled if the deceased had many relatives, due to a lack of participants.

## X. SMON LAM CHEN MO

Monks gather at a monastery to chant *ma Ni*, wishing a good life for local people in the coming year, during Smon lam chen mo 'great wishes'.

About ten communities consisting of fifteen natural

villages are in the vicinity of Bkra shis theg chen gling Monastery, which is about one kilometer from Me tog lung ba zhol ma Village. Smon lam chen mo is held there for ten days, starting from the ninth day of Lo sar. Each community (*mon lam skol*) is responsible for one day's meals for the monks (three meals total per community).

Locals make donations on the thirteenth day of Lo sar each year. Before Smon lam chen mo, families give cash, wheat, meat, vegetables, oil and bread to the monks. Then, the village organizers divide all of the gifts into equal amounts to give to the monks. The village organizers also cook the three meals for the monks.

## XI. THE END OF LO SAR

The Lo sar period ends on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month. In Me tog lung ba, wheat flour is burned with offerings from the shrine on household roofs to close Lo sar.

Village youths go to town to have fun with friends for the final day of Lo sar. Although the government organizes song competitions, archery, and dancing performances, the younger villagers find going to town to be more fun than village festivities.



## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

- 'Gag phad འགག་པ་ཕད། \*place  
*A mchod* ཨ་མཚོད། chanter  
A mdo ཨ་མདོ། \*place  
A ne Gong ma rgyal mo ཨ་ནེ་གོང་མ་རྒྱལ་མོ། the queen of heaven  
Bkra shis theg chen gling བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཐེག་ཆེན་གླིང་། \*monastery  
*bla ma* བླ་མ། lama  
Blon po gser chen བློན་པོ་གསེར་ཆེན། \*mountain deity  
*bsang khri* བསང་ཁྲི། altar  
Bsod nams rgya mtsho བསོད་ནམས་རྒྱ་མཚོ། \*person  
Chab 'gag ཆབ་འགག་ \*place  
*chab cha* ཆབ་ཇ། \*place  
*chos 'khor* ཆོས་འཁོར། circumambulation ritual  
*dar mchod* དར་མཚོད། ice offering  
Dge lugs pa དགེ་ལུགས་པ། \*sect  
Dgon pa so ma དགོན་པ་སོ་མ། \*monastery  
*dgu thug* དགུ་ཐུག་ 'nine noodles'  
*dkyus ris ma* དལྱུས་རིས་མ། a type of bread  
Dong 董 Dong (surname)  
*gnam gang* གནམ་གང་། Lo sar Eve  
*go dmar* གོ་དམར། a type of bread  
Gonghe 共和 \*place  
*gro tshag* གྲོ་ཚག་ soup  
*gser chen* གསེར་ཆེན། a flower's name  
Gshin rje chos rgyal གཤིན་རྗེ་ཆོས་རྒྱལ། Hell Master  
Haidong 海东 \*place  
Huangnang 黄南 \*place  
Huizu 回族 Hui  
*ja dam* ཇ་དམ། teapot  
*lab rtse* ལ་རེ། mountain deity altar

*lab rtse chab ril* ལ་ཙེ་ཆབ་རིལ། mountain deity altar  
*lha rgyal lo* ལྷ་རྒྱལ་ལོ། 'victory to the gods'  
*Lo sar* ལོ་སར། New Year  
*lung ba* ལུང་བ། valley  
*Ma Bufang* 马步芳 \*name  
*ma Ni khang* མ་ཉི་ཁང་། family shrine  
*mahua* 麻花 a type of bread  
*mchod khang* མཚོད་ཁང་། shrine  
*mchod pa* མཚོད་པ། offering  
*mda' dpon* མདའ་དཔོན། archery leader  
*me tog* མེ་ཏོག། flower  
*Mtsho lho* མཚོ་ལྷོ། \*place  
*Mtsho sngon* མཚོ་སྒོན། \*place  
*mu* 亩 0.666 hectares  
*Om ma Ni pad+me hum* ཨོཾ་མ་ཉི་པདྨེ་ཧཱུྃ the six sacred syllables  
*PaN chen rin po che* པན་ཆེན་རིན་པོ་ཆེ། \*a title  
*phyir lo* ཕྱིར་ལོ། next year  
*Qiabuqia* 恰卜恰 \*place  
*Qinghai* 青海 \*place  
*Qinghai hu* 青海湖 \*place  
*Reb gong* རེབ་གོང་། \*place  
*Rje tsong kha ba* རྗེ་ཙོང་ཁ་བ། \*person  
*Rlung khog* རུང་ཁོག། \*place  
*Rma lho* རྩ་ལྷོ། \*place  
*rtsam pa* རྩམ་པ། roasted barley flour  
*Rtsi kyag* རྩི་གྲག། \*clan  
*Sa skya* ས་སྐུ། \*sect  
*sha skal* ཤ་སྐལ། meat portion  
*skra phud pa* སྐར་ཕུད་པ། hair changing ritual  
*sku ra* སྐུ་ར། partner  
*smon lam* སྐོན་ལམ། 'wishes'

*smyung gnas* སྤྱང་གནས། Fasting  
*sog sog* སོག་སོག་ a type of bread  
 Song 宋 Song (surname)  
*Sprel nag* སྤྲེལ་ནག \*clan  
*thab ka* ཐབ་ཀ stove  
*thab lha* ཐབ་ལྷ། stove deity  
 Tongren 同仁 \*place  
*tsha thab* ཐ་ཐབ། sleeping platform  
 Wuqi 吴旗 \*place  
 Xunhua 循化 \*place  
 Ya rdzi ཡ་རུ་འཛི། \*place  
*yul lha* རྩལ་ལྷ། protector god

WRITE NEW VOCABULARY HERE

WRITE YOUR EVALUATION HERE

## VOCABULARY

Ask these questions to a partner.

1. What religion do you adhere to? What sect do you adhere to?
2. Is your hometown a pastoral, agricultural, or agro-pastoral community?
3. Do you ever feel anxious before exams? What things make you anxious?
4. Do people in your hometown think that completeness is auspicious? Can you think of any examples?
5. Can you describe a hospitable family or person that you know?
6. Are most people in your village literate or illiterate?
7. Have you ever joined a tug-of-war? If you have, tell me about it.
8. Are there some uninhabited places near your hometown? Have you ever stayed in an uninhabited place?
9. What is in the vicinity of our school?
10. What is something you usually do? What is something you do only sporadically?

## STRUCTURE

Underline the place phrase in each sentence. The first two are done for you.

*Chos 'khor* is held on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month at the village shrine.

Later, the flowers of every color began to bloom in Me tog lung ba.

1. Before visiting a home, men, women, and children shout "Lo sar *bzang!*" together in the courtyard or at the gate, and the family that is being visited replies, "*Bzang bzang bzang!*"
2. Butter lamps are lit and roasted barley, wheat or conifer is burnt daily in the shrine as an offering to the family *yul lha* 'protector god,' who protects the household from disease, bad luck, and disaster.
3. Due to local unrest in Hualong this family asked for shelter from a landlord in 'Gag pad ma Village near Me tog lung ba.
4. Everything became normal; swallows chirped in the sky and butterflies flitted about.
5. Monks gather at a monastery to chant *ma Ni*, wishing a good life

for local people in the coming year.

6. She prostrated to the highest mountain in the valley and then began drying the wet flower seeds in the bright sunshine.
7. The Hui population in the village still practice Islam, but speak fluent Amdo Tibetan.
8. The spring fast lasts for two days; on the third morning a large meal of *rtsam pa*, milk tea, rice, and meat dumplings is enjoyed in the village shrine, after which participants go home.
9. There are three Hui families and eighteen Han families in Me tog lung ba zhol ma Village.
10. There were more than seventy monks in this monastery in 2009.
11. Women spend much of their time weeding in the fields.

### EXERCISES

Do these exercises, then check your answers in the text.

*chirped   became   drenched   turned   appeared   prostrated  
began   flitted*

The heavy rain \_\_\_\_\_ her from head to toe. After the storm, the sky \_\_\_\_\_ blue and the sun \_\_\_\_\_ again. Everything \_\_\_\_\_ normal; swallows \_\_\_\_\_ in the sky and butterflies \_\_\_\_\_ about. The goddess was unharmed and was very grateful to the mountain deity for protecting her. She \_\_\_\_\_ to the highest mountain in the valley and then \_\_\_\_\_ drying the wet flower seeds in the bright sunshine.

Men (kills/kill) pigs and sheep. Five or six neighbors (help/helps) a family to slaughter pigs and sheep. After the slaughtering, relatives (is/are/be) invited to (dine/dine) with the family, who sends *sha ska*, 'a share,' of the meat to relatives' homes. Slaughtering animals (is/are/be) a sinful but necessary activity. Before slaughtering animals, families (light/lights) two butter lamps in the shrine and elder women or men (chants/chant) there for a while, (opens/opening/open) a bright road to the afterlife for the dying pigs.

*from to in during after*

There are three Hui families and eighteen Han families \_\_\_\_ Me tog lung ba zhol ma Village. They came there \_\_\_\_ Tibetan villagers \_\_\_\_ Me tog lung ba gong ma refused \_\_\_\_ let them continue living there. Villagers say that the Han and Hui moved \_\_\_\_ Gong ma Village and do not know their ancestral homelands. Most Han families are surnamed Dong and Song. Han \_\_\_\_ Me tog lung ba zhol ma Village follow a Tibetan lifestyle and speak the A mdo Tibetan dialect fluently. They also adhere \_\_\_\_ Tibetan Buddhism and participate \_\_\_\_ local religious rituals. \_\_\_\_ Lo sar, they visit Tibetan families with gifts, as do Tibetans.

*peace location tomb needle prosperity grave rat respect descendant*

Villagers visit their *A mchod* and take conifer \_\_\_\_\_s, fruits, candies, and new liquor to their ancestors' \_\_\_\_\_s. In my family, my father and brother visit our grandparents' tomb to ensure that no \_\_\_\_\_s have made \_\_\_\_\_s around it. Completeness of the tomb is very significant and shows \_\_\_\_\_ to the deceased. \_\_\_\_\_ and a lack of disturbances are also very important. Villagers believe that choosing an auspicious \_\_\_\_\_ for ancestors' tombs brings wealth and \_\_\_\_\_ to future generations. \_\_\_\_\_s prostrate and chant *Om mani padme hum* near the \_\_\_\_\_ for half an hour.

*a the an these those this*

Distant relatives visit after dawn. Returning \_\_\_\_ visit is necessary and \_\_\_\_ must be paid on \_\_\_\_ same day or later during Lo sar. Gifts given are of \_\_\_\_ same value as \_\_\_\_ received. If \_\_\_\_ family is large, visiting all \_\_\_\_ neighboring villages is possible if each family member visits two villages. In \_\_\_\_ way, visiting can be completed in two days. Motorcycles are often used when visiting whereas, in \_\_\_\_ 1980s and earlier, donkeys, mules, and horses were used. Very few families use cars to visit.



## CONTENT

1. Where is Me tog lung ba Village?
2. Describe the village's ethnic composition.
3. What is the origin of the village's name? What is the origin of the villagers?
4. Who are local Buddhists? Who are local Muslims?
5. What are the main rituals in the village and the nearby monastery?
6. What animals are slaughtered before Lo sar? How are they slaughtered?
7. What is *thab kha tse tse*? Why is it done?
8. Tell me about *A mchod* and *dar mchod*.
9. What is 'hair changing'? Who does this? When? Why?
10. Tell me about the archery competition.
11. What happens on the last day of Lo sar in Me tog lung ba?
12. What do you think is unique or interesting about Me tog lung ba and the New Year festivities there?

## KHAMS PA TIBETAN NEW YEAR

'Jam dbyangs pa sangs

### PART ONE: RDZA STOD TOWNSHIP

Rdza stod Township, Khri 'du County, Yul shul Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture is in the south of Mtsho sngon Province. The population of Yul shul Prefecture is approximately 268,800, 97.29% of which is Tibetan. The remaining 2.31% is made up of Han Chinese, Salar, and Hui, though the exact percentage of each is unknown. The county seat is 125km from Jyekundo, the prefecture capital. The county population of 40,000 is nearly all Tibetan.<sup>34</sup>

There are six villages<sup>35</sup> in Rdza stod Township, and almost all villagers practice animal husbandry. Rdza stod Township is located near Sga stod jo bo, 'Gold Mountain.' Sil dkar Monastery is situated at the foot of Gold Mountain, about ten kilometers from Rdza stod.

Kun dga' rgyal mtshan's<sup>36</sup> student built Sil dkar Monastery in 1249. There is a stone throne in the middle of the monastery, outside of the biggest temple, which people say belonged to King Mnga' bdag khri ral ba can.<sup>37</sup> His ministers built this throne for him when he circumambulated Sga stod jo bo in 908 CE. Local people no longer remember these ministers' names. In 2006, there were more than 500 monks and ten incarnate lamas at the monastery.

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<sup>34</sup> <http://www.qh.xinhuanet.com.cn>, accessed 12 January 2008.

<sup>35</sup> The six villages are 'Bri stod, 'Bru smad, Ge chen, Nyi 'khor, Dang phang, and Dar dmar.

<sup>36</sup> Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182-1251 CE), saved Tibetans when the Hor 'Mongols' invaded. The Hor were interested in Buddhism and invited him to visit. He then realized how powerful and strong the Hor were, and sent letters twice to Tibetan leaders requesting them to surrender to Hor, rather than fight with them. The Tibetan leaders agreed, and therefore, Kun dga' rgyal mtshan saved many lives. He also systematized the five minor sciences: rhetoric, words and expressions, syntax, dance and music, and astrology.

<sup>37</sup> King Mnga' bdag khri ral ba can is one of the forty-one Tibetan kings who reigned in Lha sa. He was born in 815 CE.

In 1993, the government founded a gold-mining company. Since then, approximately 1000 *mu* has been mined by the government around Sga stod jo bo. By 2002, when the company stopped mining, the surrounding grassland had become degraded.

## I. HISTORY

Rdza stod Township was established in 1963-1964 and a primary school, hospital, and a bank were built. Initially, only about forty families lived there.

In 1973-1974, the government created a factory called Rang ca rang gso, 'be independent', in Rdza stod Township that made leather products, using locally purchased skins. Drivers, laborers, merchants, and nomads earned income from the factory. Workers were brought to the factory from surrounding areas. By that time, more than one hundred households had relocated from the six township villages to Rdza stod Township.

As mentioned above, in 1993, the government founded Huangjin gongsi, 'The Gold Company.' More than three hundred laborers were brought from outside Rdza stod Township; most were students who had failed the university entrance examination. Additional laborers were brought to Rdza stod Township. Later more immigrants moved to the township, and the population steadily increased.

In 2000, the population of Rdza stod Township town was about 600 households. Currently, the number of buildings is increasing, more businesses are starting up, and the variety of goods available expands.

## II. RELIGION

Townspeople follow either the Dge lugs pa 'Yellow Sect' or 'Bri gung bka' rgyud sect. People visit and circumambulate the Dge lugs pa Sil dkar Monastery regardless of their sect. Four hours away by bus is Sgrub brgyud Monastery, a 'Bri gung bka' brgyud Monastery. The monastery contains two large temples and six small temples. The monastery opens its temples and displays all its statues and *thang ka* on special occasions, including the day of

offering butter lamps on the twenty-fifth of the tenth lunar month, as well as the anniversary of Tsong kha pa's death on the twenty-seventh through the twenty-ninth of the twelfth lunar month. From the fourteenth to the fifteenth days of the fifth lunar month, monks walk to local foot-hills and mountains to chant scripture and make burn offerings to the *yul lha*.<sup>6</sup> The five page scripture they chant is known as Rnam rgyal. Rain always falls during this two-day ritual, which locals refer to as Ri krus.

On the fifteenth day of the first lunar month, townspeople visit Sil dkar Monastery and chant scriptures with lamas and monks in the same temple that night.

Regardless of their sect, townspeople consult lamas from Sil dkar Monastery. Currently the highest lama in this monastery is the sixteenth Tse sgu lama. Tse sgu and other lamas are consulted for the most auspicious dates for ceremonies and for naming children. The lamas are also asked which school children should attend and which hospital patients should visit.

Certain townspeople and especially elders abstain from eating meat on both the fifteenth and thirtieth days of each lunar month.

When a townspeople dies, their corpse must be sent to the monastery of the sect they follow. Monks cut the corpse to pieces. Some of the deceased's property is given to the sect they follow. The exact amount depends on how generous their children or relatives are and how wealthy the person was.

### III. LANGUAGE

Townspeople speak Khams dialect. Students who attend university in Xining, the provincial capital and site of the most accessible tertiary education, lack Khams-speaking teachers; all teachers are A mdo dialect speakers. One example of the difference between Khams and A mdo dialect is that ཨ in Khams is pronounced *ba* and in A mdo *wa*.

Most townspeople in Rdza stod understand very little Chinese. In recent years, however, younger generations have begun speaking Tibetan mixed with Chinese. Elders and parents

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<sup>6</sup> Local god.

criticize youths for doing this, but the trend continues nonetheless. A short dialogue between a mother and child exemplifies this mixed language:

(T) = Tibetan, (C) = Chinese

*Child*

Ma ma sgo phyas

Mother (C) door (T) open (T)

Mother, open the door.

*Mother*

Gza ro, A ma rdzo mi shes i red

Stupid (T) mother (T) call (T) not (T) know (T) ? (T)

Stupid, can't you call me mother (in Tibetan)?

*Child*

A ma lao shi gis nga xia wu slob grwa shog ser

Mother (T) teacher (C) to (T) I (T) afternoon(C) school (T) come  
(T) said (T)

Mother, teacher said that I need to go to school this afternoon.

#### IV. EDUCATION

Since 2006, all Rdza stod villages have had primary schools with grades one to three, except for Dar dmar Village. The school buildings were built by the Khri 'du County Education Office. Each school has about twenty to thirty students and three teachers. Most teachers are college graduates who could not obtain official employment elsewhere and have become *minban jiaoshi* 'community teachers' who receive a salary 300 RMB per month, a poor local wage. Some teachers are local, others are not, but all are Tibetan. They teach in both Chinese and Tibetan.

Many students drop out of school after nine years of compulsory education because their families need their help at home. Families are often unable to pay senior middle school and college fees. Each year, 2,000 RMB is spent in senior middle school on management fees, book fees, and food. College tuition is more than 4,000 RMB per year.

On 15 May 2007, the Khri 'du County Education Department implemented a government policy known as Pal chen gnyis. This policy seeks to eliminate illiteracy by enforcing compulsory education for people aged eighteen to fifty. Additionally, children aged seven to fifteen must attend school. Certain nomad families were forcibly moved to the township so that family members would attend school, which has resulted in a lack of labor on the pastures. Certain young monks and nuns, about ten years of age, were made to disrobe and attend school. The Rdza stod Township Primary School previously offered grades one to six and had about 500 students. After the implementation of the Pal chen gnyis policy, the student body grew to about 1,000. Similarly, enrollment in every village primary school increased by ten to twenty students.

## V. LIVELIHOOD

Pastoralists' livelihood depends on the number of livestock they have and the number of family members. From 1993 to 2002, nomadic life in Rdza stod became increasingly difficult due to the mining work that was taking place. As the grassland became increasingly degraded, there were fewer places for livestock to graze. During this time, both humans and livestock died from falling into holes dug by the mining company. Locals had great animosity towards the company, believing that catastrophes, such as snow disasters and floods, occurred more severely and frequently after the company arrived.

*Shengtai yimin*, 'Ecological immigration', has been implemented since 2006, ostensibly in order to allow rangeland to recover from degradation. According to this policy, nomad families who move to the township must sell all their livestock and give up animal husbandry. Each village had to nominate forty households to migrate, but individual households could choose to move or not. Community leaders and government representatives choose poor families. In total, all six villages' migrants total 240 households. Houses in the Township were built by the government for free. The government also promised to provide each family 3,000 RMB annually for ten years.

The pastoral families that moved to the township were

willing to make the move in the beginning. Nowadays, however, they face many problems. For example, their only income is their government stipend. Most resettled herders are illiterate and lack skills to generate income. Furthermore, construction work is difficult for them, because they have previously only herded; it is very difficult to change their lifestyle. Below is a profile of a typical ecological immigrant.

My name is Pu dga. I am forty-six years old (in 2005) and there are seven people in my family. I'm from Khri 'du County. I have lived here since 26 September 2005. I consider my family's current economic condition to be bad.

My father is a herder. He never went to school but he can read Tibetan and so can I.

In the past I never did seasonal or government work, but I worked regularly herding livestock and buying goods from the township town. I also did some business, killing male yaks and selling meat. I also sold live yaks in the winter and summer. I used to have forty yaks – twenty-two males and eighteen females. I also had two horses. Right now, I have no male yaks, only twelve female yaks and one horse. I have never owned sheep, goats, or dogs that could be sold for a high price.

I never hired laborers to work on my pasture and never herded others' animals. Now, however, my brother is herding my remaining twelve female yaks. There is no precise payment for this work. If they produce much milk and butter, he gets more. If production is low, he gets less.

When I lived as a herder I sold one or two yaks most years. One yak can be sold for about 1,500 RMB, depending on the yak's size and quality. I sold seventy to eighty *jīn* of yak butter and forty to fifty *jīn* of yak cheese. One *jīn* of butter brought eleven to twelve RMB and one *jīn* of cheese could fetch four to five RMB. I have never sold yoghurt or yak milk. I did sell yak hair, but not often enough that I could tell you the price. I sold three to four yak skins a year. Each one brought in 100 RMB; I also sold more than 100 sacks of yak dung, at 4.5 RMB a sack.

In addition, two people in my family collected 'bu, 'caterpillar fungus,' from May to June, and earned 2,000-3,000 RMB. Also, between April and October, two family members dug *gro ma*, earning 250 RMB. We had no other sources of income.

When I was a herder, our monthly expenditure included 100 *jīn*

of *rtsam pa* (eighty to ninety RMB), fifty *jin* of flour (forty to seventy RMB), fifty *jin* of rice (seventy to eighty RMB), nine RMB of salt, twenty RMB of sugar, 150 RMB of cooking oil, and forty to fifty RMB of tea. We sometimes bought butter, cheese, *gro ma*, and meat, but we rarely bought vegetables, fruits, or candies.

Medicine, clothing, livestock fodder, and transport fees were all unpredictable expenditures.

## VI. CLOTHES

Elders wear Tibetan robes, *dbyar gos* and *dgun gos*, and younger generations wear modern clothes. *Dbyar gos* are made of cloth or silk. Women's robes with artificial wool lining are worn in warm weather and cost about 200 RMB each. *Dgun gos* is made of cloth or silk sewn with *tsha ru*, 'lambskin'. They are worn in cold weather and cost about 1,000 RMB each. In the past, *rgyan gos* were stitched with otter, tiger, or leopard skin on the bottom edge and worn on such special occasions as weddings, horse races, and Lo sar. They signified wealth and cost around 4,000 RMB each. To buy such robes, many families went into debt by borrowing from rich families or banks.

A powerful Buddhist teaching forbade people from wearing animal skins in early 2006. Some families detached the skin from their robes and sold them. Others kept them, including *wa zhwa* or fox skin hats. Some people secretly burned their fur. Currently, *rgyan gos* is stitched with silk on the bottom edge. Townspeople now wear beautiful new clothes more often, because silk is much cheaper than animal skin.

## VII. TRANSPORT

Local roads are all made of asphalt. The road between the township and county town and the road from the county town to the prefecture capital do not follow the most direct route. The fare from Rdza stod to Yul shul prefecture capital by bus is fifty RMB.

Roads from Rdza dod Township to the six villages and Khri 'du County to the prefecture capital Skye dgu, and to Xining City, have recently been improved and repaired. Merchants easily transport merchandise between Yul shul prefecture capital and



Xining city.

Until the 1990s, it was difficult to transport goods. Therefore, townspeople couldn't buy many vegetables (vegetables cannot be planted locally as it is too cold). At that time, townspeople's staple foods were *rtsam pa*<sup>8</sup> and meat. Recently this has changed. Eating vegetables is now common; some children only rarely eat *rtsam pa*. Some people in Rdza stod Township are even vegetarians after various lamas from several places held winter teachings promoting vegetarianism.

Starting from around 1999, motorbike ownership increased. Males use motorbikes to transport goods and for personal transportation. Only a few women drive motorcycles.

## VIII. ELECTRICITY

Until 2007, Rdza stod Township had sufficient electricity except in winter from a hydropower station constructed in 1993. Every house had electricity, beginning in 1993. Most families now have televisions and a DVD or VCD player. Townspeople usually watch TV every day for about two hours after dinner. Families with good living conditions that have more income than expenditure have washing machines, refrigerators, and electric stoves.

Since 2007, the township has had electricity in all seasons (unlike before), because the township started to use electricity from a hydropower station in Lab Township, Khri 'du County. The Lab hydropower station is on the Yangtze River and is the largest hydropower station in Yul shul Prefecture. Construction began in 2005.

## PART TWO: LO SAR

Since the 1980s, most Khams Tibetans began following the Chinese lunar calendar for Lo sar. This is called Rgya lo 'Chinese year', but locals also celebrate Tibetan New Year, which they call

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<sup>8</sup> *Rtsam pa* is the Tibetan staple food; it is usually made of roasted barley flour, butter, and tea.

Lo chung.<sup>9</sup> They celebrate twice, both Chinese New Year and Tibetan New Year, if they are not at the same time (which occasionally they are). Monasteries and herding families follow the Tibetan calendar, or Bod lo 'Tibetan Year', while townspeople follow Rgya lo.

Local elders say the main difference between Rgya lo and Bod lo is that Bod lo has a leap month; residents usually celebrate Lo sar following Bod lo, but because of the extra month sometimes Bod lo is celebrated after Rgya lo. Sometimes it will be at the same time, as in the Year of the Mouse (2008). Government workers and students have winter holidays according to Rgya lo, consequently, they lack adequate time to celebrate Bod lo and therefore celebrate Lo sar after Rgya lo. Lo sar is celebrated from the first till the fifteenth of the first lunar month.

Yak meat and mutton are prepared as the eleventh lunar month approaches. Locals put meat in a cold place to freeze in preparation for Lo sar. Each family often kills one yak or two sheep, depending on the family's economic condition. Rich families kill more while poor families kill only one sheep.

Townspeople begin preparing for Lo sar two weeks before it begins. They purchase soft drinks, liquor, cigarettes, pork, chicken, candy, biscuits, vegetables, clothes, and fireworks. Poorer families spend about 500 RMB while richer families spend around 2,000 RMB.

In recent years, vegetable dishes have become more common, especially during Lo sar. Vegetable prices often increase sharply as Lo sar approaches. For example, chili usually costs three to four RMB per kilogram, but at Lo sar, the same amount costs ten to twelve RMB. Townspeople make vegetable purchases starting around the second or third day of Lo sar, otherwise vegetables spoil.

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<sup>9</sup> Lo chung refers to simple Lo sar celebrations. 'Lo' means 'year' and '*chung*' means 'small'.

## I. THREE DAYS BEFORE LO SAR

The day before Lo sar is called *brgyad tsag tsag*<sup>10</sup> for both Rgya lo and Bod lo. Barley is roasted and a meal of mixed meat, fat, and raw barley is cooked. However this tradition ended during the 1980s.

Today, women and girls generally make bread, as do some men. *Bro dgyu* 'curved bread' and *bro kar* 'colorful bread' are used for decoration. To make this bread, wheat flour is poured into a metal basin until it is half full. A little cool water is added and the mixture is kneaded with washed hands for about three minutes. Then, the dough is placed into bubbling oil. Someone stands near the stove with chopsticks and turns it, making sure to cook it evenly on both sides, then the bread is picked up with chopsticks, piece by piece, and put into boxes or plastic bags. Each one is slightly smaller than a hand. Generally, each family uses fifty kilos of flour to make bread.

*Bro kar* is made in the same way, except the white flour is mixed with brown sugar and fruit tea that adds color and sweetens the bread. Nomads usually make *bro dgyu*, but not *bro kar*, from flour bought in the township store.

After dinner on *Brygud tsag tsag*, family members make *thud*, an indispensable Lo sar food, by boiling butter in a small teapot, pouring it into a basin of cheese, sugar, and raisins, and stirring it with washed hands. The mixture is next put into bowls up to fifteen centimeters in diameter. After cooling, the *thud* is cut into pieces. The final product is white. Each family prepares one or two *thud*.

## II. TWO DAYS BEFORE LO SAR

The day before New Year's Eve is called *dgu sbag sbag*.<sup>11</sup> Traditionally, a meal is cooked using barley and nine different

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<sup>10</sup> *Brgyad* means eight, referring to the twenty-eighth day and *tsag tsag* is an onomatopoeia for the sound of roasting barley and of deep frying bread.

<sup>11</sup> Here, *dgu* means nine and symbolizes the 29<sup>th</sup>. *Sbag sbag* is an onomatopoeia for the sound of boiling.

ingredients, e.g. rice, *gro ma*,<sup>12</sup> cheese, tea, butter, beans, and Tibetan highland barley. This last ingredient however, has disappeared.

In recent years, families steam *gro ma* (which they buy from farmers) and meat. In the morning, all family members prepare for Lo sar by cleaning the house, yard, and windows, and washing clothes, sheets, and curtains. The refuse is burned in the afternoon, House cleaning is called *du ba spug* 'pat the smoke' and all family members participate. It requires about eight hours, and is believed to bring luck in the coming year.

Family members wash their hair after finishing their work. Males have their hair cut by someone who is good at barbering and females braid their hair. In the past, females wore long ornate headdresses which hung down their backs to their waists. Now, only elder women wear such headdresses.

### III. LO SAR EVE

People wish themselves *gnam gang*<sup>13</sup> and *sa gang*<sup>14</sup> – wishes for abundance and fullness – on Lo sar Eve. Lo sar food is offered to *thang ka* and pictures of lamas in the family shrine before eating. Locals term such food *zas pud 'bul* 'offering fresh or new food', and believe it brings prosperity in the coming year.

Young people, especially boys, bring cypress twigs from their homes and make a fire at night. Certain local places have cypress trees and people from these places give cypress to others as gifts, since all families use it to make offerings on the first day of Lo sar. At midnight, fireworks are set off amidst yelling and dancing.

### IV. THE FIRST DAY OF LO SAR

On this day, the female in each family who usually does the housework gets up at dawn and brings two pails of water from the

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<sup>12</sup> *Gro ma* is kind of herbal medicine that is sweet and can stop diarrhea.

<sup>13</sup> *Gnam gang*: full of sky

<sup>14</sup> *Sa gang*: full of earth

well. This is *seng ge dkar mo krus chu* 'snow lion blessed water' and is used by the family to wash their faces and hands. Young males put on new or recently washed clothes and climb up the mountain behind the township where there are numerous prayer flags. Here, they prostrate three times, and shout "*Gi gi bso bso, lha rgya lo, pho lha bso, yul lha bso, dgra lha bso, rang yul skyid ba'i gzhi bdag bso,*" throw wind horses into the sky, and tie new prayer flags to the old ones.

When the sun rises from behind the east mountain, householders make a fire offering to *yul lha*. A man or boy at the home brings smoldering yak dung in a basin and places it on white stones near the house. Cypress, *rtsam pa*, and butter are put in the basin. After about a minute, he chants *a ho* very slowly and loudly, and uses a bundle of cypress to sprinkle water on the fire.

At around the same time, either the mother or a daughter fetches more water for drinking. This is called *o rgyan pad ma'i sgrub chu*, 'Padmasambhava's blessed water'.

All family members are expected to eat a small bowl of *gro ma* with melted butter, sugar, and cheese before eating anything else. They flick butter three times skyward with the ring finger on their right hand before eating. Family members wear new or washed clothes, eat delicious food, drink beer and other beverages, play *the ge*<sup>16</sup> and cards, and watch TV. There is no visiting on the first day, villagers just sit and enjoy themselves with their family members and go to bed between ten and eleven p.m.

## V. THE SECOND DAY OF LO SAR

Visiting and gatherings begin the next day. Pastoralists from far away used to ride horses or walk to watch Lo sar performances held on this day, but they currently ride motorbikes or take cars. The Lo sar performance is held at the school or another local

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<sup>15</sup> *The ge* is a sheep or goat's knuckle bone. It has four sides, called *ra*, *lug*, *rta*, and *nor* (goat, sheep, horse, and yak). First the *the ge* are spread on the ground and one's thumb is crossed over the index finger to shoot the *the ge* at another *the ge* which are displaying the same sides, e.g *ra* to *ra*, *lug* to *lug*, and so on.

government venue. Performances focus on Khams Tibetan dances and folk songs, as well as modern Tibetan songs.

The host typically says, "*Yul shul ni glu gar gyi pha sa yin*, Yul shul is the native place of song and dance," when beginning the show. Local people proudly describe men's dancing as being like a steed running on a beautiful grassland; hand movements are also said to resemble an eagle in flight – "*Rta gom chen rtswa thang steng nas rgyugs 'dra, thang dkar rgod po gshog 'gyur rgyab 'dra*." The dancers wear very long sleeves with their *rgyan gos*. Females wear amber and coral decorations in their long black hair. Males wrap *sdag ra*, 'red string,' around their head.

In recent years, local students have worked together to organize the events.

## VI. THE THIRD DAY OF LO SAR

The third day of Lo sar is a day for visiting. People rarely visit before this day. A variety of dishes, including mutton and beef, are cooked at home and *thud* is served. Various Lo sar foods are put on tables for visitors. Traditionally, relatives and friends who are not celebrating Lo sar because they are in mourning (family members of the deceased mourn for 365 days) stay at home. Next, families invite elderly relatives. They give them a dragon-decorated bowl with butter pasted on the bottom. They do not keep this bowl, in which there is nothing but the pasted butter. Third, families invite younger relatives or friends.

Children are excited to visit relatives without invitation. In the past, children were given candies but, in 2009, children were given one to five RMB.

There are no special rituals after the third day of Lo sar until the final day, when a ritual is held in Sil dkar Monastery.

## VII. PERSONAL ACCOUNT

It is the fifteenth and final day of Lo sar. Some of my male friends and former classmates visit Sil dkar Monastery at around ten a.m. We circumambulate the monastery three times. It takes about half an hour each time. Then, we circumambulate the eight stupas in front of the oldest and largest temple. We also offer prayer flags to

the mountain behind the monastery. This mountain is Sga stod jo bo's son. At lunch time, we visit the statue of the goddess Tara, which can be visited only twice a year. The temple is very crowded.

Afterwards, we visit our monk relatives and sit with them until dusk. We have a great opportunity to chant with monks, the only chance that we have to do so in the year. Females can't go to the temple after sunset and thus do not join the chanting.

We chant and pray to *chos skyong* and *srung ma*, 'guardian deities', starting around seven p.m. in the newly built temple which is forty meters long and twenty meters wide. It was built in 2004. The temple is full of people. The walls inside the temple are covered in Buddhist murals. Many *thang ka* hang from the walls and many images are displayed. Lamas are on thrones in the temple center and monks sit cross-legged on carpets. Lay men sit behind the monks. Bde ba can gyi zhing du skye ba 'dzin pa'i smon lam zhing mchog sgo 'byed ces bya ba gzhugs so is the main scripture that is chanted.

We first chant Sgyabs 'gro from memory for about half an hour.

*Bla ma la skyabs su mchi'o*  
*Sangs rgyas la skyabs su mchi'o*  
*Chos la skyabs su mchi'o*  
*Dge 'dun la skyabs su mchi'o*  
*Bla ma yi dam dkon mchog gsum la skyabs su mchi'o*

Pay homage to lamas,  
Pay homage to the Buddha,  
Pay homage to the Dharma,  
Pay homage to the Sangha,  
Pay homage to the Lama, tutelary deity, and the three Jewels.

Next, we chant Mchod phreng (four pages), Bde smon (six pages), Dag bai'i shi smon (four pages), Gdor 'bul, and Bstan 'bum (five pages). Finally, we chant Dmigs brdze:

*Dmigs med brtse ba'i gter chen spyen ras gzigs*  
*Dri med mkhyen ba'i dbang pa'i 'jam ba'i dbyangs*  
*Bdud dpung ma lus 'joms mtshan gsong ba'i bdag*  
*Gangs can mkhas ba'i gtsug rgyan tsong kha pa*  
*Blo bzang grags ba'i zhabs la gsol ba 'debs*

Master of endless compassion, Avalokiteshvara,  
Master of pure wisdom, Manjushri,  
Vanquisher of evil, powerful Vajrapani,  
The greatest scholar of Tibet,  
Pray for Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa.



## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

- 'Bri gung bka' rgyud འབྲི་གུང་བཀའ་རྒྱུད། \*sect  
 'bu འབྲ། caterpillar fungus  
 A mdo ཨ་མདོ། \*place  
 Bde smon བདེ་སྦོམ། \*scripture  
 Bod lo བོད་ལོ། 'Tibetan year'  
 brgyad tsag tsag བརྒྱད་ཅག་ཅག the 28<sup>th</sup> of the twelfth lunar month  
 bro dgyu བློ་དབྱུ། curved bread  
 bro kar བློ་ཀར། colorful bread  
 Bstan 'bum བསྟན་པུམ་འབུམ། \*scripture  
 chos skyong ཚོས་སྦྱོང། guardian deities  
 Dag pa'i shis smon དག་པའི་ཤིས་སྦོམ། \*scripture  
 Dar dmar དར་དམར། a village  
 dbyar gos དབྱར་གོས། summer clothes  
 Dge lugs pa དགེ་ལུགས་པ། \*sect  
 dgu sbag sbag དགུ་སྐག་སྐག the 29<sup>th</sup> of the twelfth lunar month  
 dgun gos དགུན་གོས། winter clothes  
 Dmig brdze དམིག་བརྟེ། \*scripture  
 du ba spug དུ་བ་སྐུག 'smoke patting'  
 Gdor 'bul གདོར་པུལ་འབུལ། \*scripture  
 gnam gang གནམ་གང། 'full sky'  
 gro ma གྲོ་མ། yam  
 Huangjin gongsi 黄金公司 Gold Company  
 Khams pa ཁམས་པ། \*people  
 Khri 'du ཁྲི་འདུ། \*place  
 Kun dga' rgyal mtshan ཀུན་དགའ་རྒྱལ་མཚན། \*person  
 Lab ལའ། \*place  
 Lo chung ལོ་ཚུང། Small Lo sar  
 Mchod phreng མཚོད་ཕྱེང། \*scripture  
 minban jiaoshi 民办教师 community teacher

Mnga bdag khri ral ba can མངའ་བདག་ཁྲི་རལ་བ་ཅན། \*person  
 Mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྒོན། \*place  
 Pal chen gnyis བལ་ཆེན་གཉིས། government literacy policy  
*rang kha rang gso* རང་ཁ་རང་གསོ། \*business  
 Rdza stod རྩ་སྟོད། \*place  
 Rgya lo རྒྱ་ལོ། 'Chinese year'  
*rgyan gos* རྒྱ་གོས། robes worn on special occasions  
*ri krus* རི་ཀུས། \*a ritual  
 Rnam rgyal རྣམ་རྒྱལ། \*scripture  
*rtsam pa* རྩམ་པ། roasted barley flour  
 Sa gang ས་གང་། 'full earth'  
*seng ge dkar mo'i khurus chu* སེང་གེ་དཀར་མེའི་བླུས་ལྷ། 'snow lion blessed  
 water'  
 Sga stod jo bo སྐ་སྟོད་རྫོ་བོ། Gold Mountain  
 Sgrub brgyud སྐུབ་བརྒྱུད། \*monastery  
*shengtai yimin* 生态移民 ecological immigration  
 Sil dkar སེལ་དཀར། monastery  
 Skyabs 'gro སྐུབས་འགོ། \*scripture  
 Skye dgu སྐེ་དགུ། \*place  
*srung ma* སྤང་མ། guardian deities  
*thang ka* ཐང་ཀ། religious painting  
*the ge* ཐེ་གེ། goats' knuckle bone  
*thud* ཐུད། cake made of cheese and butter  
*tsha ru* ཐ་རུ། lamb's wool  
*wa zhwa* ར་ཞུ། fox skin hat  
 Yul lha རུལ་ལྷ། Regional deity  
 Yul shul རུལ་ཤུལ། \*place

WRITE NEW VOCABULARY HERE

WRITE YOUR EVALUATION HERE

## VOCABULARY

Match the word with the meaning.

- |                   |                                     |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. asphalt        | _____ a dead body                   |
| 2. animosity      | _____ a person who doesn't eat meat |
| 3. catastrophe    | _____ black stuff put on roads      |
| 4. corpse         | _____ a person who helps a king     |
| 5. debt           | _____ quietly, gently burning       |
| 6. disrobe        | _____ hatred, dislike               |
| 7. graze          | _____ a big disaster                |
| 8. headdress      | _____ livestock eat                 |
| 9. incarnate      | _____ when you owe money            |
| 10. indispensable | _____ monk or nun becomes a layman  |
| 11. minister      | _____ very important, necessary     |
| 12. smoldering    | _____ reborn                        |
| 13. vegetarian    | _____ decorations worn in the hair  |

## STRUCTURE

Underline the phrases that begin with 'for'. The first is done for you.

His ministers built this throne for him when he circumambulated  
Sga sdod jo bo in 908 CE.

1. In 1993, the government founded a company for mining gold in the area.
2. Monks walk to local foot-hills and mountains to chant scripture and make a sacrificial fire for the *yul lha*.
3. Tse sgu and other lamas are consulted for the most auspicious dates for ceremonies and for naming children.
4. Elders and parents criticize youths for doing this, but the trend continues nonetheless.
5. This policy seeks to eliminate illiteracy by enforcing compulsory education for people aged eighteen to fifty.

Add 'for' phrases to the sentences below.

1. He bought a gift...
2. He went home...

3. She consulted a lama...
4. He built a new room...
5. She scolded her son...
6. They went looking...
7. I am staying here...

### EXERCISES

Do these exercises, then check your answers in the text.

*contain visit follow fall make chant circumambulate open display walk refer*

Townpeople \_\_\_\_\_ either the Dge lugs pa 'Yellow Sect' and 'Bri gung bka' rgyud sect. People \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ the Dge lugs pa Sil dkar Monastery regardless of their sect. Four hours away by bus is Sgrub brgyud Monastery, a 'Bri gung bka' brgyud Monastery. The monastery \_\_\_\_\_s two large temples and six small temples. The monastery \_\_\_\_\_s its temples and \_\_\_\_\_s all its statues and *thang ka* on special occasions, including the day of offering butter lamps on the twenty-fifth of the tenth lunar month, as well as the anniversary of Tsong kha pa's death on the twenty-seventh through the twenty-ninth of the twelfth lunar month. From the fourteenth to the fifteenth days of the fifth lunar month, monks \_\_\_\_\_ to local foot-hills and mountains to \_\_\_\_\_ scripture and \_\_\_\_\_ a sacrificial fire for the *yul lha*. The five pages scripture they chant is known as Rnam rgyal. Rain always \_\_\_\_\_s on those two days, so locals \_\_\_\_\_ to the ritual as Ri krus.

On 15 May 2007, the Khri 'du County Education Department (implement/implemented) a government policy (known/know) as Pal chen gnyis. This policy (seek/seeks) to (eliminating/eliminate) illiteracy by (enforcing/enforces) compulsory education for people aged eighteen to fifty. Additionally, children aged seven to fifteen must (attends/attend) school. Certain nomad families were forcibly (moved/moves) to the township so that family members would

(attends/attend) school, which has (result/resulted) in a lack of labor on the pastures. Certain young monks and nuns, about ten years of age, were (made/make) to disrobe and (attended/attend) school. The Rdza stod Township Primary School previously (offers/offered) grades one to six and had about 500 students. After the implementation of the Pal chen gnyis policy, the student body (grew/grow) to about 1,000. Similarly, enrollment in every village primary school (increased/increase) by ten to twenty students.

*in to up by for from*

*Sheng tai yi min*, 'Ecological immigration,' has been implemented since 2006, ostensibly \_\_\_\_\_ order to allow rangeland \_\_\_\_\_ recover \_\_\_\_\_ degradation. According \_\_\_\_\_ this policy, nomad families who move \_\_\_\_\_ the township must sell all their livestock and give \_\_\_\_\_ animal husbandry. Each village had \_\_\_\_\_ nominate forty households \_\_\_\_\_ migrate, but individual households could choose \_\_\_\_\_ move or not. Community leaders and government representatives choose poor families. \_\_\_\_\_ total, all six villages' migrants total 240 households. Houses \_\_\_\_\_ the Township were built \_\_\_\_\_ the government \_\_\_\_\_ free. The government also promised \_\_\_\_\_ provide each family 3,000 RMB a year \_\_\_\_\_ ten years.

## CONTENT

1. What are some important things that have happened in Rdza stod township since it was established?
2. What sects do local people follow?
3. How do local people mix Chinese and Tibetan together when they speak?
4. What policy did the government implement in 2007? What is the aim of the policy? What are the results?
5. What is ecological migration? Why did it happen?
6. Tell me about Pu dga, the ecological immigrant. How has his life changed since he relocated?
7. How has the local transport situation changed in recent years? How has this affected people?
8. Tell me about *Brygud tsag tsag* and *dgu sbag sbag*.
9. What water is fetched on the first day of the new year?
10. Tell me about the Khams pa dancing.

# LO SAR IN 'BRU RDZI VILLAGE, SLAUGHTERING PIGS, AND CATCHING THRUSHES

Rdo rje tshe brtan

## PART ONE: VILLAGE LIFE IN 'BRU RDZI VILLAGE

### I. LOCATION

'Bru rdzi Village (G.yi ba Township) is located 4.5 kilometers northwest of The bo County Town. It is 250 kilometers from Gtsos (Hezuo) City, the capital of Kan lho (Gannan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, and 400 kilometers from Lan kru'u (Lanzhou) City, the capital of Kan su'u (Gansu) Province.

### II. VILLAGE NAME AND POPULATION

'Bru rdzi Village literally means 'Grain Protectors Village', because between 1958 and 1962, this township's residents farmed collectively and the community's grain was stored in 'Bru rdzi Village. The village had many granaries and was surrounded by a wall. The lower part of the wall was stone, and the upper part was rammed earth. The wall remains, but the granaries do not.

'Bru rdzi village has a total of forty-seven households containing just over 250 residents. Each family has an average of nine members, representing three generations. Most village residents were born after 1955.

Village clans are A myes bu brad (fourteen households), Shu mkhar chen (eighteen households), and Dbas' rgod (fifteen households). 'Bru rdzi Village has no clan leaders and there are no origin stories or other folklore regarding these clans.

### III. VILLAGE LIVELIHOODS

Several of the wealthier villagers tend large herds of yaks, horses, sheep, goats, cows, mules, *mdzo mo*, and pigs. Poorer families own only a few cows, yaks, and swine. Families with livestock earn income from selling milk, butter, cheese, wool, and meat. Families who own few livestock primarily consume animal products on a



subsistence basis. Formerly, local villagers used horses, mules, and yaks to plow fields where barley, beans, wheat, and potatoes were cultivated. However in 2002, the provincial and local governments issued a regulation which converted all agricultural land into community-managed forests and grasslands. The government offered a subsidy of 300 RMB per *mu* for eight years to each family whose farmland was converted.

#### IV. VILLAGE HISTORY

The Co ne Dpon po<sup>38</sup> used to rule The bo and Co ne counties. There were more than 500 agricultural households in G.yi ba Township at that time. Each village had to pay taxes to the Dpon po. Village leaders chosen by the Dpon po collected taxes. Each family paid five or six leather bags of grain annually, regardless of the harvest. Each leather bag, called a *zo ba* and made by locals from livestock skins, could hold one hundred kilograms. *Zo ba* were only used to transport grain in 'Bru rdzi Village.

Village leaders selected ten or fifteen people from each village to the transport taxes collected from each family to the Co ne Dpon po using mules, horses, and yaks that were collectively owned by each village. It took three days of travel through dense forests and over high rocky mountains to go from The bo to Co ne. Bears, tigers, and bandits were some of the challenges that could be met while travelling. After arriving in Co ne County, the transporters were warmly greeted and given a feast by the Co ne Dpon po, who then gave a signed receipt to each village leader.

'Bru rdzi village, however, did not pay such taxes. 'Bru rdzi villager Grags ba (b.1934) stated that about seventy years ago (~1938), Co ne Dpon po's soldiers killed many Muslims in the Ka chu region, near Lanzhou, because of religious differences and the Con ne Dpon po's desire to acquire more land.. Soon after, the Chinese Nationalist Government decided to imprison the Co ne Dpon po. Meanwhile, there was a man from 'Bru rdzi named Lha mo skyabs who bore a striking resemblance to Co ne Dpon po and acted as Co ne Dpon po's substitute in jail. 'Bru rdzi villagers were proud of him, but also saddened, as Lha mo skyabs never returned.

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<sup>38</sup> A local Tibetan chief who ruled and protected The bo County for generations before the Red Army arrived. He was paid grain taxes.

Because of Lha mo skyabs's sacrifice, 'Bru rdzi villagers were exempt from paying grain taxes to Co ne Dpon po. Instead, they paid the same tax in the same amount to Lha mo skyabs's family. Today, the local community still shows respect to that family, offering *kha btags*<sup>39</sup> and homemade liquor to his family's descendants on such special days as the *lab tse* festival<sup>40</sup> and New Year.

## V. VILLAGE HOUSES

Village houses are made of timber, which also supply much firewood. The houses are two stories tall. The first story contains a room eighteen to twenty meters wide and twenty-eight to thirty meters long. The second story has four or five small rooms, including a family shrine, bedrooms, and living rooms. The first story is used mostly in summer, when the weather is hot, and for gatherings like wedding parties, funerals, and New Year parties. Valuable furniture is displayed on the first floor to showcase the family's wealth. A *dzoto*<sup>41</sup> made of earth and stone is prominent in the first floor room. Sometimes the family cooks food in front of the *dzoto*. Other items on display include copper pots and copper teapots, cooking utensils, and old *thang kha* paintings depicting mountain deities and important lamas. Recently, houses have begun displaying TVs, stereos, Tibetan-style containers made of juniper wood, and bedding.

A wood house lasts about five decades. Then, after getting permission from the local or county government, timber for a new house is cut from the local forest under the guidance of local Tibetan carpenters. Wood houses have a courtyard surrounded by a

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<sup>39</sup> A *kha btags* is a white silk strip given to others as a sign of pure intention and respect.

<sup>40</sup> An annual festival in 'Bru rdzi village. Local people make large wooden arrows and bows which are used to renew the local *lab rtse*, a mountaintop altar to the mountain deity.

<sup>41</sup> This local oral term has no written form. This large platform is made from adobe. In front of it is a stove and, when a fire is made inside it, the heat and smoke are conducted through pipes beneath the platform, heating it. Family members sit and sleep on the platform.

five to six meter-high wall with a stone base and adobe upper section. Houses' roofs are covered in wood tiles. There are four windows on the first and second stories. Houses have electricity.

Running water reached 'Bru rdzi Village in 2008 and families can now fetch water from taps immediately in front of their houses. The majority of households have pit toilets in the back of the family courtyard.

## VI. FOOD

Pork is commonly eaten in daily life. Village households raise five or six pigs which are herded in spring, summer, and autumn. The family puts a sow and her piglets in a separate pigsty that is near to the regular pigsty when the sow gives birth. Normally, the pigsty is two meters long and one meter wide, while the enclosure for the sow and piglets is one and a half meters long, one meter wide, and about one and a half meters high. This enclosure is made from wooden posts that are reinforced to prevent the sow, who is often voraciously hungry, from breaking out of the pen.

Bread, *rtsam pa*,<sup>42</sup> cheese, butter, black tea, and milk tea are also consumed. Villagers rarely eat rice with vegetables, or noodles. On special occasions, families eat fried breads, milk tea, and vegetables.

## VII. RELIGION

People in upper (northern) The bo follow Dge lugs pa Buddhism while those in the lower (southern) part follow Bon. Most The bo natives are Bon adherents. Many Bon monasteries are located in lower The bo, such as the Legs lung Monastery and the Ta ra monastery. Formerly, people from upper The bo did not marry people from lower The bo, and there was little contact between the two areas. Now, however, people who have jobs in the County Town and Prefecture Town ignore such differences. It seems that more and more people are following Dge lugs pa Buddhism, as many Dge lugs pa monasteries are currently being built and some

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<sup>42</sup> *Rtsam pa* is roasted barley flour mixed with cheese, butter (though sometimes pig fat), black tea, and sometimes with sugar.

Bon monasteries are becoming Buddhist. Examples of this include Stag ri sgang Nunnery in Stag ri sgang Village, Gza' ru Township, Si khron (Sichuan) Province, and Dbal shes Monastery in Steng ga Village, Steng ga Township, The bo County.

Villagers venerate several deities, including 'Grong rgod tse brgyad (the deity who watches over local people), A physis 'grug cang gser mo (the deity protecting local livestock), Rdzi bo lha tog dkar bo and Pan phrug (village territorial deities), and Nang<sup>43</sup> chen thang lha (this deity, found widely throughout Tibetan areas, is believed to be capable of helping people to succeed in business). These deities each have *lab rtse* where local males burn juniper tree branches and offer milk and butter on specific dates. For example, people visit the Rdzi bo lha tog dkar bo *lab rtse* on the thirteenth day of the third lunar month. Another locally important deity is Rma chen spom ra, who protects crops.

Getzema,<sup>44</sup> a *klu mo* 'female water deity', lives in the water in the village forest. There is no designated time to visit her; locals visit her whenever there is a drought and local women and girls ask her for rain before villagers harvest crops in autumn. Only a few old women now know how to beseech the *klu mo* for rain. Villagers no longer practice this because cropland was returned to forest in 2002, and locals no longer need to cultivate.

Each family has their individual family *thab lha* (stove deity) to which they offer *bsang*<sup>45</sup> every morning, especially on such auspicious days as the first, eighth, fifteenth, and twenty-eighth days of each lunar month. The family stove deity lives in the family stove, and may be.<sup>46</sup>

1. *Gon tog* 'head illness'
2. *Chu tog* 'stomachache illness'
3. *Bus tog* 'knee illness'
4. *Gan tog* 'neck ache illness'
5. *Ge tog* 'back illness'

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<sup>43</sup> Alternatively, Gnyan.

<sup>44</sup> This oral term has no known written form.

<sup>45</sup> Juniper branches mixed with barley, beans, and wheat and barley flour are burned on the family altar as offerings to local and stove gods.

<sup>46</sup> These oral terms are written in Wylie to show the local pronunciation rather than the literary Tibetan spelling.

6. *Lag tog* 'hand illness'
7. *Zha yi tog* 'illness of infants and children'
8. *Phag tog* 'illness of pigs'

When guests visit 'Bru rdzi families, hosts never allow them to touch the stove or sit by it because doing so makes guests ill. For example, if a family has a stomachache family deity (*Chu tog*), touching or carelessly putting one's clothes on the family stove results in a stomachache after the guest leaves the home.

## PART TWO: LO SAR

### I. CLEANING

On the nineteenth or twenty-sixth days of the eleventh lunar month, villagers clean their houses, pigsties, and the stables in which horses, cows, and *mdzo* are enclosed. People believe that cleaning houses improves their health and fortune in the coming year. A young family member collects very long bamboo stalks and uproots several saplings in the forest; any tree may be used. Locals then use metal wire to tie ten to fifteen bamboo stalks, each around two and a half meters long, together and use them as brooms to sweep the ceilings. Saplings are also used to clean the ceilings. Women and girls take the quilts, bedding, and everything else out from the home early in the morning. Women move furniture to the courtyard and men move pork and bags of grain out into the courtyard. Four or five hours of hard work later, the cleaning is finished and villagers put each piece of furniture and grain back inside in its original place. Women and girls throw the refuse away at a village garbage dump, about a kilometer from the village.

The head of the family cooks pork for supper. All the family members receive pieces of pork, called *skal* 'share', by locals, which they eat at home. The bamboo and branches are thrown away on New Years' Eve into a river or at the village garbage dump, symbolizing the expulsion of ghosts and evils from the home and village. Villagers set off many fire crackers when this is done. Old people cry, "*Zearo! Garo!*"<sup>47</sup> to drive away evils

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<sup>47</sup> These oral terms do not have a written form and are only used in

and ghosts while brandishing swords and knives in the air.

## II. COOKING BREAD

There is no specific time to cook bread; doing so depends on when neighbors and village relatives have time. Each family kneads wheat flour by themselves and puts it in a warm place, such as on the *dzoto* or near the fire, for more than ten hours, and then begins to cook it. Women and girls knead wheat flour, cut it into pieces, roll it into balls, and flatten it. Wood stamps are used to impress various images on the dough before it is put in boiling oil. The women cook three small baskets of bread, spending three or four hours doing so each home. Women and girls make the bread in different sizes and shapes, which are mostly flat and round (about ten centimeters across). A few pieces of bread, called *go re bosho*<sup>48</sup> are made to resemble birds, snakes, and frogs. Locals cook enough bread for their families and guests to eat for ten days.

## III. SLAUGHTERING PIGS

Pork is an important local food that is given to relatives at weddings, funerals, and other special occasions. Pork is always cooked for visitors to show hospitality. High school and university graduates covertly use pork as inducements to help persuade officials to provide employment. Some families sell pork in the county town before New Year to earn cash.

Old people and students herd pigs with village herdsmen on the summer pasture. It takes about fifty minutes to reach the summer pasture on foot. Summer weather is variable and a fine day may quickly turn stormy. Locals begin herding at sunrise. Pigs are released from the pigsty and oink happily, wiggling their tails. Local people say, "Wiggling tails is a pig's work. It seems easy, but in fact it takes much energy. If they didn't wiggle their tails, they would be even fatter." For this reason, some families cut pigs' tails

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the context of driving away evil.

<sup>48</sup> *Go re* means bread and *bosho* is a local oral term meaning small and has no literary form. *Go re bosho* therefore means 'small bread'.

short when they are piglets, in the hope of increasing the pigs' weight in adulthood.

Pigs begin eating grass as soon as they reach the summer pasture. After several hours, they go to a nearby pool to rest. It is not difficult to herd pigs on the summer pasture, except on rainy days, when pigs scatter and try to return home earlier than usual.

Local people are experienced in feeding, selling, and managing pigs, which are slaughtered before the New Year. Usually, pigs are given water and less grain than usual prior to the slaughtering. This makes it easier to wash the pigs' intestines, which are used to make sausages. A monk chants Buddhist scriptures (Skyabs 'gro and Ltung gshags) before the slaughtering and is paid fifteen RMB per day. After a family invites a monk to chant, he comes to the home on foot from local Sbo sho Monastery, half an hour away. Family members clean the house and prepare such utensils as pots, basins, kettles, and knives early in the morning. The family informs twelve clansmen that the family will slaughter pigs the day before the monk arrives. The family calls them to have breakfast at around seven o'clock the next morning. They come bearing ropes and knives.

As the clansmen eat breakfast, young male family members go to the pigsty while the older men sharpen their knives. They slowly approach the pigs; if they approach quickly, the pig will bite them. The number of people who participate in this depends on how many pigs will be slaughtered; for example, four people go to the pigsty if there are four pigs. The men jump into the pigsty and grab each pig's ears tightly from behind. Someone with experience uses a stick to help these men slip a noose over the pig's head and around its neck (the stick is used to extend the noose to the side opposite the man). The pigs are very ferocious at this time and great caution must be used to ensure that the men are not bitten. After fixing the noose, the man who has placed the noose on the pig tosses the end of the rope over a rafter, and pulls it up with the help of other men, raising the pig off the ground. It dies quickly if water is poured in its mouth.

One person takes two to three minutes to rush home to get knives and basins. A man who is close to the family repeatedly stabs a knife into each pig's heart, to get as much warm blood as possible to use to make blood sausages. Three butter-lamps are lit in the family shrine. The monk and an old family member chant

the Six Sacred Syllables<sup>49</sup> during this process to absolve the killer of sin. A person holds the back of the pig and loosens the rope, letting the blood run into a metal basin beneath the pig. Meanwhile, the monk enters into the pigsty with a prayer wheel and holy water. He chants the Six Sacred Syllables loudly and touches the prayer wheel three times to the pig's head in the hope that the pig will be accompanied in death by *ma Ni*, bringing luck to the pig's next life. The monk also pours *sngags chu* (holy water that has been blessed by a lama from the local monastery) into the pig's mouth, hoping it will die immediately from the blessed water without unnecessary pain.

The carcasses are put into a handcart and trundled to the stream bank with all of the utensils and kettles, as well as a large pot of water that was heated when the clansmen were called to have breakfast. Clan men check the boiled water with their hands three times, to ensure that the water is hot enough to remove the pigs' bristles. The carcasses are then placed in the water. The ears are held while the pig is lowered. Boiled water makes it easier to remove bristles which are later traded with itinerant merchants for red peppers and cash.

The carcass is next placed on a long wooden board, which is then placed directly over a fire in order to roast the carcass. Others stoke the fire with firewood. After the carcasses are roasted, they are cleaned with water several times. The pig is then cut open and the blood inside its chest is removed with a small bowl and placed in a metal basin. The intestines, liver, heart, and other organs are also removed. At this time, people who are inexperienced in the rest of the slaughtering process wash the intestines. Children hold kettles to pour water into the intestines to rinse them. Older men take the carcasses home and divide them in half with an ax. The meat is then hung from rafters above the family stove. The young people return home at lunchtime, having finished washing the pigs' intestines and bottoms, where the old men have cut off the pigs' tails. Cooks prepare a special but brief lunch for the butchers: a plate of pork pieces mixed with chili, vinegar, and the liver and hearts of the pigs. Family children push the cart full of extra firewood, used basins, and kettles home to be washed, while the butchers have lunch and drink beer. When the butchers finish eating, they continue working. Other family

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<sup>49</sup> oM ma Ni pad+me hUM.



members then have lunch for about an hour at home.

Clan men divide their work for the rest of the day. Two older experienced men knead barley flour mixed with small bits of pork, onion, and salt. This mixture is then stuffed into intestines to make *rtsam pa* sausages. Simultaneously, four young people mix blood and bean flour with water, and pour the mixture into a big pot. Salt, onion, garlic, and other spices are added, and the ingredients are mixed and stuffed into intestines to make blood sausages. The soft, slippery, nature of the intestines makes it very difficult for children to hold on to them as they are stuffed. Meanwhile, two older people boil the sausages in a pot. The head of the family boils the pigs' legs and necks in the kitchen, as others wash utensils that were used that morning.

In the afternoon, when the butchers are finished with their work, the host family invites them to sit in the living room and eat supper. Pork, sausages, beer, and bread are served. Other family members, especially children, are impatient to eat pork. Two young men cut five kinds of pork, collectively known as *sha skal*:<sup>50</sup> blood sausages, *rtsam pa* sausages, liver, pigskin, and stomach. The shares are put neatly on the tables. These shares are given to each family member and to each of the helper's family members' friends and relatives. The family has to cook a big pot of congee, made of rice, pieces of pork, water, and salt. It is eaten by the clan children, who come to get *sha skal* after the butchers leave. The head of the family cooks three plates of pork, blood sausages, and other meat and puts them on the table before the butchers, allowing them to taste the fruits of their labor. The butchers eat the pork while drinking beer and chatting. They also receive pork and sausages when they leave. Some are drunk and young men escort them home.

#### IV. CATCHING THRUSHES

At about five-thirty a.m. on the first day of Lo sar, one of the oldest men in each family offers butter lamps to *lha yul* 'the abode of the gods,' *yul lha*, 'the family deity,' and the family shrine. He prostrates in the four directions, sets off firecrackers, and then returns to bed. All family members rise when the sun comes up (at

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<sup>50</sup> Locally pronounced *ha ga*.

about seven- thirty), dress in new clothes, and gather at the family shrine to pray to the gods, lamas, and scriptures (Yum, Bka' 'gyur and Bstan 'gyur) in order to bring luck in the coming year. After praying for about half an hour, the family head takes *rtsam pa*, butter, and a little clean water to the altar and makes *bsang*. Meanwhile, women and girls cook pork, noodles, and milk tea for breakfast in the kitchen. Next, all family members gather in the dining room and eat breakfast together. At about ten o'clock, the village leader walks through the lanes yelling for men and boys to come and catch thrushes. He calls, "*Jomo dari nza* Go catch thrushes."<sup>51</sup>

All the men and boys come out and divide into two groups that are approximately equal in number. Customarily, 'Bru rdzi villagers catch three thrushes to symbolize the three auspicious things (lamas, scripture, and monks) and the catching of three external enemies (the enemies of *sde dpon* 'the head leader', *sde dpon chung bo* 'vice-leader', and the villagers). The young men try their best to catch a thrush, believing that doing so will bring success in the coming year. Thrushes are caught when they come to drink from the stream near the village fields. Elder men surround the area where the thrushes are and throw dust at the birds. After the dust is thrown into a thrush's eyes, it cannot see and hides in the grass or in a hole. Following the elders' instructions, young men catch three thrushes over a period of several hours. When the villagers have caught three thrushes they return to the village.

The villagers shout, "*Lha rgyal lo!* Victory to the gods!" three times together after catching three thrushes, and return to the village shouting, "*Lha rgyal lo!*" three times as they enter the village and then again as they reach the village center where women are waiting on two long benches, curious to see who has caught the thrushes. Elders order young men to collect five loaves of bread and a piece of pork from each family in the village. These foods will be cooked together by the village men and women at the meeting hall (located on the northwest side of the village) on the sixteenth day of the New Year to mark the end of Lo sar. The people who caught the thrushes put them in a basket covered with a woman's head scarf. After they finish collecting the bread and pork, the thrushes are taken to a monk who has returned home

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<sup>51</sup> This oral phrase has no literary equivalent.

from his monastery for Lo sar. He blesses the thrushes by chanting scriptures over them and tying a red cloth to the birds' wings. Then, the three thrushes are released. Meanwhile, old men take turns visiting each home and drinking. They sing *rten 'brel* songs (praise songs on religious topics) and other auspicious songs such as New Year songs. Young villagers do not sing these songs; they dislike them and do not know how to sing them. Below is a sample of lyrics taken from a 'Bru rdzi Village *rten 'brel* song, published by A bsang et al (2001).

*Rten 'brel* song 1

- <sup>1</sup> རྒྱུད་བདེ་བདེ་ཡང་གནས་ཆང་བདེ།
- <sup>2</sup> གནས་ཆང་ཆང་གི་བསྟོད་ར་རེད།
- <sup>3</sup> རྒྱལ་ཉིན་བཟང་སྐར་བཟང་ཆེས་བཟང་གསུམ།
- <sup>4</sup> རྒྱལ་བྱ་ཆོགས་པའི་སྐར་མ་རེད།
- <sup>5</sup> ད་ཐམས་ཅད་སྟོན་མའི་(རེ་གཞི་) རེད།
- <sup>6</sup> ཆོས་ཐམས་ཅད་དགེ་བའི་རང་སྒྲུབ་རེད།
- <sup>7</sup> ཆོས་དང་པོ་འདོན་ན་སྐྱབས་འགྲོ་ཐོན།
- <sup>8</sup> ལྷ་དང་པོ་ལེན་ན་སྐྱབས་འདེན་ལངས།
- <sup>9</sup> སྐྱབས་འདེན་སྐྱབས་འདེན་ཟེར་མི་ཆོ།
- <sup>10</sup> སྐྱབས་འདེན་མའི་སྒྲ་མ་གང་ན་ཡོད།
- <sup>11</sup> ཁང་བ་ཁང་འབྲུབས་སྟེང་ན་སྐྱ་ཞིག་ཡོད།
- <sup>12</sup> ཉུང་དང་སྟོན་མའི་སྟེང་ན་སྐྱ་ཞིག་ཡོད།
- <sup>13</sup> བྱ་མོ་པར་སྒྲུབ་སྟེང་ན་སྐྱ་ཞིག་ཡོད།
- <sup>14</sup> མནའ་མ་ཚུར་ལེན་སྟེང་ན་སྐྱ་ཞིག་ཡོད།
- <sup>15</sup> ཨ་ཞང་(ཨ་མགོན་) ཡིན་པ་ཐག་ཆོད་རེད།
- <sup>16</sup> ཆ་པོ་པོ་རབས་ཡིན་པ་ཐག་ཆོད་རེད།
- <sup>17</sup> བར་འདི་ཕྱེ་མར་ཡིན་པ་ཐག་ཆོད།

- <sup>1</sup> You be well, well, and your family be well too.
- <sup>2</sup> This is the family, the family's praise song.
- <sup>3</sup> Victorious! The day, the star, the date, all three are good.
- <sup>4</sup> Victorious! This date is the day for men's gatherings.
- <sup>5</sup> Now is the hope of all celebrations.

- <sup>6</sup> The Dharma is the source of all happiness.  
<sup>7</sup> Taking refuge is the first religious utterance.  
<sup>8</sup> Singing *sbyan 'dren*<sup>52</sup> is the first song to sing.  
<sup>9</sup> Everything is singing *sbyan 'dren*, *sbyan 'dren*.<sup>53</sup>  
<sup>10</sup> Where is the lama of the people singing *sbyan 'dren*?  
<sup>11</sup> For the house, house building, there is a song.  
<sup>12</sup> For the party and the wedding, there is a song.  
<sup>13</sup> For the girl being escorted [to her wedding], there is a song.  
<sup>14</sup> To welcome a new bride, there is a song.  
<sup>15</sup> The *A zhang*<sup>54</sup> and guests have surely decided.  
<sup>16</sup> The nephews and good men have surely decided.  
<sup>17</sup> This middle *phye mar*<sup>55</sup> has surely been decided.

### *Rten 'brel Song 2*

- <sup>1</sup> ང་ཏྲ་སར་རྒྱུང་ཡང་ཏྲ་རྒྱུད་བཟང་།  
<sup>2</sup> ཐང་ཡང་ས་མོ་རིག་ན་མི་རྒྱག་མེད།  
<sup>3</sup> མཛོ་རྒྱུང་དཀར་རྒྱུང་ཡང་མཛོ་རྒྱུད་བཟང་།  
<sup>4</sup> ཁལ་ལྷོ་མོ་བཀལ་རུང་མི་འཁུར་མེད།  
<sup>5</sup> ང་ལྷ་བ་རྒྱུང་ཡང་ལྷ་ལ་མཁས།  
<sup>6</sup> ཀཏམ་གྲིད་པའི་ཁོག་ལ་མི་འགྲོ་མེད།  
<sup>7</sup> ང་ཚས་བ་དག་བཤེས་ཡོད་ས་ནས།  
<sup>8</sup> ཚས (ཅ་ཆེན་ཅོར་རྒྱུང་) འདྲོན་ས་མེད།  
<sup>9</sup> ང་ལྷ་བ་ཀན་པོ་ཡོད་ས་ན།  
<sup>10</sup> ལྷ་ཅ་ལྷ་ཅོར་ལྷ་ལེན་ས་མེད།  
<sup>11</sup> ལྷ་གསུམ་གསུམ་མགོ་ཚན་སྒྲིག་གིས་འགྲོ།  
<sup>12</sup> ལྷ་བཞི་བཞི་བྲངས་ན་ལྷ་བ་མིན།  
<sup>13</sup> ང་མཆོར་ཁའི་དེ་བོ་ས་མེད་བོ།  
<sup>14</sup> ཏུས་ད་ལྷ་ས་ཞིག་ཡོད་ནི་འདི།  
<sup>15</sup> ངས་འབྲུ་རིགས་ལྷ་ལྷ་འཆའ་འདྲོད་ན།

<sup>52</sup> *Sbyan 'dren* is the opening part of a song.

<sup>53</sup> Literally, saying *spyen 'drin*. These songs are sung antiphonally, like a conversation.

<sup>54</sup> The *A zhang* are maternal uncles.

<sup>55</sup> The middle part of the song.

16 ང་ས་ཁའི་བྱ་མོང་མིག་མེད་པོ།  
 17 ཏུས་ད་ལྟ་མྱིག་ཞིག་ཡོད་ནི་འདི།  
 18 ངས་འཇོམ་སྒྲིང་ཁམས་ལ་ལྟ་འདོད་ན།  
 19 ང་མི་བོ་རྒྱུང་ཡང་མི་རྒྱུད་བཟང་།  
 20 ཟུ་སྲིད་པའི་ཁོག་ལ་འགྲོ་འདོད་ཡོད།  
 21 ཞང་བོ་ཨ་མ་གྲོན་ཡིན་པ་ཐག་ཆོད་རེད།  
 22 ཆ་བོ་ཨ་མ་ཐག་ཆོད་རེད།  
 23 བར་འདི་བྱ་མར་ཡིན་པ་ཐག་ཆོད་རེད།  
 24 བྱ་མར་བྱ་མར་ཟེར་མི་ཆོ།  
 25 བྱ་མར་རི་རབ་བཞེགས་འབྲ་ཤོད།  
 26 ཨ་མ་གྲོན་ཨ་མ་གྲོན་ཟེར་མི་ཆོ།  
 27 ཨ་མ་གྲོན་སྒོ་རབས་སྒོ་བྲན་ཤོད།  
 28 ང་རྟ་བོ་རྒྱུང་ཡང་རྟ་རྒྱུད་བཟང་།  
 29 སྒོ་ད་དུས་གཅིང་ཡུལ་ལ་ལན་གསུམ་སོང་།  
 30 ང་ལན་གསུམ་རིང་ལ་མ་ཆད་ཐལ།  
 31 ཏུས་ད་ལྟ་ཆད་ན་སྒོན་ལས་རེད།  
 32 མཛོ་བྱུང་དཀར་རྒྱུང་ཡང་མཛོ་རྒྱུད་བཟང་།  
 33 ས་ཟེ་ཡིང་མཁར་ལ་ལན་གསུམ་སོང་།  
 34 ང་ལན་གསུམ་རིང་ལ་མ་ཆད་ཐལ།  
 35 ཏུས་ད་ལྟ་ཆད་ན་སྒོན་ལས་རེད།  
 36 ང་སྐྱ་བོ་རྒྱུང་ཡང་སྐྱ་ལ་མཁར།  
 37 ཟུ་སྲིད་པའི་ཁོག་ལ་ལན་གསུམ་རེད།  
 38 ང་ལན་གསུམ་རིང་ལ་མ་ཆད་ཐལ།  
 39 ཏུས་ད་ལྟ་ཆད་ན་སྒོན་ལས་རེད།

<sup>1</sup> I am a horse which lives in an insignificant place, but I am from a good lineage.

<sup>2</sup> Seeing a vast grassland, I can't help but run.

<sup>3</sup> I am a *mdzo* with only small patches of color, but I am from a good lineage.

<sup>4</sup> Being laden with a heavy pack, I can't help but carry it.

<sup>5</sup> I am an insignificant person, but an expert singer.

<sup>6</sup> Telling the story of the world's creation, I can't help but be

insightful.

- <sup>7</sup> I, a monk as knowledgeable as a *dge bshes*,<sup>56</sup> am here,  
<sup>8</sup> If you don't understand the Dharma, you have nothing to chant.  
<sup>9</sup> I, an old singer, am here,  
<sup>10</sup> If you don't know about songs, you have nothing to sing.  
<sup>11</sup> You must put three lines together to sing,<sup>57</sup>  
<sup>12</sup> If you put four parts together, you're not a singer.  
<sup>13</sup> I am a toothless pheasant, flying above thorny bushes,  
<sup>14</sup> Having grown teeth,  
<sup>15</sup> I want to eat the five types of grain,  
<sup>16</sup> I am an eyeless marmot underground,  
<sup>17</sup> Having grown eyes,  
<sup>18</sup> I want to see the world.  
<sup>19</sup> I am an insignificant person, but from a good lineage,  
<sup>20</sup> I want to sing insightfully about the world.  
<sup>21</sup> The *A zhang* and guests have surely decided.  
<sup>22</sup> The nephews and good men have surely decided.  
<sup>23</sup> This middle *phye mar* has surely been decided.  
<sup>24</sup> All the people singing, *phye mar*, *phye mar*  
<sup>25</sup> Must discuss the mountains of flour and butter.<sup>58</sup>  
<sup>26</sup> All the people singing, the guests, the guests  
<sup>27</sup> Must discuss what the guests are thinking.  
<sup>28</sup> I, a horse which lives in an insignificant place, am from a good lineage,  
<sup>29</sup> Went to upper U-Tsang three times,  
<sup>30</sup> Each time I was not exhausted,  
<sup>31</sup> But if now I become exhausted, that is my karma.  
<sup>32</sup> I, a *mdzo* with only small patches of color, but from a good lineage,  
<sup>33</sup> Went to Xining City three times,  
<sup>34</sup> Each time I was not exhausted,  
<sup>35</sup> But if now I become exhausted, that is my karma.  
<sup>36</sup> I am an insignificant person, but an expert singer.  
<sup>37</sup> Three times I insightfully sang the song of the world,

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<sup>56</sup> A *dge bshes* is the highest educational scholar rank for monks.

<sup>57</sup> Three lines makes a verse.

<sup>58</sup> *Phye mar* can mean the middle section of a song, but *phye* alone means 'flour' and *mar* means 'butter.' This line is a pun that refers simultaneously to both the middle section of a song and to the food *phye mar*.

- <sup>38</sup> And each time I was not exhausted,  
<sup>39</sup> But if now I become exhausted, that is my karma.

## V. VISITING EACH FAMILY DURING LO SAR

After catching thrushes, the old men take turns visiting each household. They drink homemade liquor, fruit juice, and beer that are offered by families and displayed on their tables. They sing and joke. At first, the old men visit fifteen families per day for three days of Lo sar. As the old men visit the second family, young people visit the first family that the old men just left and then, afterwards, all the village children visit. Each household is therefore visited by elder men first, followed by young men, and finally children. Young people sing in Tibetan, Chinese, and, sometimes, in English. They sing songs while enjoying fruit juice, fruit, and beer. As the day ends, the young men escort the drunk elders back to their homes. Four days is required to visit every village household to sing, play, and give auspicious speeches. Older people make speeches in which they wish people good luck, more livestock, a good harvest, and an absence of disease and conflict in the coming year. Local people believe that this brings good luck to all the village families.

## VI. OFFERING *BSANG* TO THE MOUNTAIN DEITY

On the third day of the first lunar month, all male villagers come to the village *bsang khri* to offer *bsang* to the mountain deity. Five minutes are needed walk to the site where offerings are made. All males in each family must offer *bsang* on this day; even male infants are taken. Clean water, conifer branches, and *rtsam pa* are taken to the village altar at about five a.m. A very large pile of *bsang* is made on the altar, which is decorated with butter and *rtsam pa*. Finally, the *bsang* is lit and men compete to chant the local *bsang yig* 'incense scripture' the loudest:.

<sup>1</sup> བསང་འབྲུལ་ལྷ། བསང་འབྲུལ་ལྷ། བསང་འབྲུལ་ལྷ།

<sup>2</sup> བརྒྱ་འབྲུལ་ལྷ། རྟོང་འབྲུལ་ལྷ། ཁྱི་འབྲུལ་ལྷ།

<sup>3</sup> བརྒྱ་མ་ལོན་བརྒྱ་ཁ་གསོ། རྟོང་མ་ལོན་རྟོང་ཁ་གསོ། ཁྱི་མ་ལོན་ཁྱི་ཁ་གསོ།

<sup>4</sup> བརྒྱ་འབུལ་ལ། ལྷོང་འབུལ་ལ། ཁྲི་འབུལ་ལ།  
<sup>5</sup> དེ་རིང་ཉི་མ་བཟང་པོ་མཆོད་ནི་ཡིན། དེ་རིང་སྐར་མ་བཟང་པོ་མཆོད་ནི་ཡི  
 ཅན།  
<sup>6</sup> བཟླ་ཤིས་ལྷའི་ཉིན་སྐར་མཆོད་ནི་ཡིན། བཟླ་ཤིས་བའི་ཉིན་དཀར་མཆོད་ནི་  
 ཡིན། རྩོན་འགྲུབ་པའི་ཉིན་དཀར་མཆོད་ནི་ཡིན།  
<sup>7</sup> བེལ་བའི་ཉིན་དཀར་མཆོད་ནི་ཡིན། ཁོམ་པའི་ཉིན་སྐར་མཆོད་ནི་ཡིན། ལ  
 ས་པའི་ཉིན་དཀར་མཆོད་ནི་ཡིན།  
<sup>8</sup> རྩེ་བུ་ཆོ་འཛོམས་པའི་སློན་ལམ། རྒྱགས་ར་ཁ་གང་བའི་སློན་ལམ།  
<sup>9</sup> མི་ལ་ན་ཆ་མེད་པ། ཟླ་ལ་གོད་ཁ་མེད་པ།  
<sup>10</sup> འབྲུ་རིགས་འབྲ་འབྲ་མཆོད་གི་ཡོད་དུས། ཆར་བ་འབྲ་འབྲ་འབབ་གི་ཡོད་  
 དགོས།  
<sup>11</sup> བསང་འདིས་མ་བསང་ནི་ཡོད་ན་བསང་དགོས།  
<sup>12</sup> བསང་འདིས་མ་དར་ནི་ཡོད་ན་དར་དགོས།  
<sup>13</sup> བསང་འདིས་མ་རྒྱས་ནི་ཡོད་ན་རྒྱས་དགོས།  
<sup>14</sup> ང་བཟང་པོ་དང་འཕྲད་གི་འདུག ང་ངན་པ་འཛོལ་གི་འདུག  
<sup>15</sup> རིགས་རྒྱུད་དབང་ཐང་ཆར་བ་འབབ། ཁ་ལས་རྒྱུད་ཏྲ་ཏྲ་རྒྱགས་རྒྱགས། ཁ་  
 རྒྱ་བསོད་ནམས་འོད་འཛོར་འཛོར།  
<sup>16</sup> ལྷ་བ་ས་མདུད་པ་རྒྱག་རྟོགས། ཐེལ་ས་ལྷན་པ་རྒྱག་རྟོགས།  
<sup>17</sup> གར་སང་ཁ་རྩོད་བ། གར་བསྐྱད་གཞིས་རྩོད་བ།  
<sup>18</sup> མཁས་པ་ཐུག་ན་བཤད་རྟོགས་འགྱུར་དགོས། རྒན་པ་ཐུག་ན་སྦྱོང་རྟོགས་  
 འགྱུར་དགོས།

- <sup>1</sup> Offer *bsang*, offer *bsang*, offer *bsang*.
- <sup>2</sup> Offer one hundred, offer one thousand, and offer ten thousand.
- <sup>3</sup> Fill the one hundred, it's not full; fill the one thousand, it's not full, fill the ten thousand, it's not full.
- <sup>4</sup> Offer one hundred, offer one thousand, and offer ten thousand.
- <sup>5</sup> Offer on today's auspicious day, offer on today's auspicious day.
- <sup>6</sup> Offer on the special day of the family god, the auspicious day, and the mountain god's celebration day.
- <sup>7</sup> Offer during free time, and work time, and other busy times.
- <sup>8</sup> May the village be full of boys and the enclosure full of livestock.
- <sup>9</sup> May no harm befall people and no diseases come to livestock.
- <sup>10</sup> Offer different types of grain like falling water.



- <sup>11</sup> If incense smoke rises to paradise, it will purify the gods of heaven.
- <sup>12</sup> If incense smoke rises, it purifies the mountain deities of space.
- <sup>13</sup> If incense smoke goes into the world, it purifies the water deities of the earth.
- <sup>14</sup> May I encounter good things and may I avoid all bad things.
- <sup>15</sup> May I meet luck everyday; have sufficient food every year, and have offspring to bind together the generations.
- <sup>16</sup> Tying like the tiny place, patching like the tattered place to help me as long as possible.
- <sup>17</sup> May there be happiness wherever I go, and a warm home wherever I live.
- <sup>18</sup> May others help me if I encounter scholars; teacher teach me if I make mistakes.

Elders bring homemade liquor, beer, and liquor bought from the county town to this ritual. After offering *bsang*, they enjoy the drinks they have brought. Some people scatter *rlung rta* in the blue sky. Old people say that if people offer *bsang* and celebrate on the mountain deity's day, then the mountain deity will be very happy and protect the village from danger and harm.

## VII. WEDDINGS DURING LO SAR

'Bru rdzi villagers hold weddings on the fourth and fifth days of the first lunar month. Drinking parties are also held during this time. Local boys and girls are not timid with each other during this time and talk openly about their feelings, even if older men and women are present. Youngsters may also show their feelings if they have affection for somebody.

In general, the oldest brother marries and stays at home to care for the family while his siblings leave home when they marry. However, brothers sometimes divide the family's property and fields equally if the family is wealthy and all the brothers want to stay in the village. Moreover, the oldest brother customarily takes care of the father, while the second brother looks after the mother. Family members divide equally into the brothers' families. Sisters often leave home and marry outside the village (though sometimes they marry inside). In the past, a man could marry his wife's sister

if he was rich and could support both women (especially if the women's family was poor). Mkha' 'gro Tshe ring (male, born 1985), from La kha Village fifteen kilometers from 'Bru rdzi, explained that this still occurs in La kha Village. Additionally, before the 1960s, 'Bru rdzi Village also practiced polyandry: after the oldest brother married, his younger brothers shared his wife and fathered children with her. The oldest brother got to have the first child with his wife, the second brother had the second child, and so on. This practice no longer exists; monogamy has become the norm.

Early in the morning of the fourth or fifth days of Lo sar, all village men and women<sup>59</sup> gather at the bride's natal home to escort her to the groom's family home. Clan men and women are especially busy at this time. Several monks chant *g.yang 'bod*<sup>60</sup> at the bride's home. Elder women assist the bride in donning her wedding clothes at daybreak of the fourth day of Lo sar. Clan members co-operate to arrange items to take to the groom's house. Children with nothing else to do wait for the bride to come out, so they can see her in her new clothes. It is customary for the bride's family to give bags of grain to the groom's family and the groom's family to give an equivalent amount of pork to the bride's family (they generally give half a pig for each bag of grain). Then elders sing *rten 'brel* songs and children dance while young men busily prepare to transport the gifts for the groom's family. When the bride finishes putting on her wedding clothes, the villagers escort her to the groom's home. The bride's family and friends cry quietly and the mother wails.

Clansmen and women offer homemade beer and liquor to guests and local villagers who come to escort the bride. Before the bride gets in the car, all females kiss her on the lips or cheeks to bid her farewell.

The bride's and groom's groups meet at a point half-way between the two homes, where the groom's side has prepared a fire, several rugs, and much beer and liquor. The groom's side sets off firecrackers and offers *kha btags*, liquor and beer to the bride's

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<sup>59</sup> All villagers are invited, but many do not attend.

<sup>60</sup> *'Bod* means 'to call,' and *g.yang* may be translated as 'potency', 'fortune', or 'prosperity'. This ritual is performed to safeguard against the bride taking family's prosperity with her when she leaves.

uncles and aunts. Old people sing *rten 'brel* songs and children dance and sing. Both sides enjoy offerings from the other party. Three to six hours pass in this manner at the wedding party. Both sides exchange prepared grain and pork and both older men and women give speeches praising the bride and groom,<sup>61</sup> offering *kha btags* to each side. That night, there is a party in the groom's home which is attended by villagers and the bride's maternal uncles; attendees sing, dance, and drink.

The groom's family and villagers escort the bride back to her home the next day. The bride's new family and villagers welcome her. The bride's family offers *kha btags* and drinks to the groom's family. The process of the day before is repeated.

## VIII. THE FIFTH TO THE FIFTEENTH DAY OF LO SAR

After the fifth day of Lo sar, a few locals circumambulate the abode of local mountain deities, while others remain at home watching TV and visiting. On the fifteenth day of Lo sar, immediate family members gather for a big meal before Lo sar concludes.

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<sup>61</sup> Women address women and men address men.

## FIGURES



'Bru rdzi Village



A typical 'Bru rdzi Village house





Pigs in the summer pasture.



Lab tse for A phyas 'brug rkyang gser mo.

# NON-ENGLISH TERMS

- 'Bru rdzi འབྲུ་རྩེ། \*place name  
A zhang ཨ་མཛང། maternal uncle  
Bon བོན། \*religion  
*bsang* བསང། incense offering  
*bsang khri* བསང་ཁྲི། incense altar  
*bsang yig* བསང་ཡིག། chanting  
Co ne dpon po ཙོ་ནེ་དཔོན་པོ། \*person  
*dge bshes* དགེ་བཤེས། highly educated monk  
Dge lugs pa དགེ་ལུགས་པ། \*sect  
Dpa' rgod དཔའ་རྫོད། \*clan  
*g.yang 'bod* གཡང་འབོད། 'calling potency'  
Gannan 甘南 \*place  
Gansu 甘肃 \*place  
*go re bosho* གོ་རེ་བོ་ཤོ། bread  
Gtsos གཙོས། \*place  
Hezuo 合作 \*place  
Huizu 回族 Hui  
Ka chu ཀ་ཅུ། \*place  
Kan lho ཀན་ལྷོ། \*place  
Kan su'u ཀན་སུ་ཁུ། \*place  
*kha btags* ཁ་བཏགས། white silk scarf  
*klu mo* ལྷ་མོ། female water deity  
*lab rtse* ལ་རཙེ། mountain deity altar  
Lan gru'u ལན་གུ་ཁུ། \*place  
Lanzhou 兰州 \*place  
Legs lung ལེགས་ལུང། \*a monastery  
*lha yul* ལྷ་ཡུལ། home of gods  
Ltung gshags ལུང་གཤགས། \*scripture  
Ma mo'i bu dral མ་མོ་འི་བུ་དྲལ། \*clan

*mdzo mo* མཛོ་མོ། yak cow hybrid  
*mu* ཡུ 0.666 hectares  
*phye mar* རྩེ་མར། flour/butter  
*rlung rta* རྩུང་རྩ། wind horse  
*rten 'brel* རྟེན་འབྲེལ། cause and effect, song genre  
*rtsam pa* རྩམ་པ། roasted barley flour  
*sha skal* ཤ་སྐལ། meat portion  
*Shu mkhar chen* ཤུ་མཁར་ཆེན། \*clan  
*Sichuan* ངུ་ཁུ། \*place  
*skal* སྐལ། share/portion  
*Skyabs 'gro* སྐྱམས་འགྲོ། \*scripture  
*sngags chu* སྔགས་ཆུ། Holy water  
*thang kha* ཐང་ཀ་། religious paintings  
*yul lha* ཡུལ་ལྷ། home deity  
*Zo ba* ཟོ་བ། leather bag

WRITE NEW VOCABULARY HERE



WRITE YOUR EVALUATION HERE

## VOCABULARY

Ask these questions to a partner.

1. What is the difference between a corpse and a carcass?
2. Do your villagers own anything collectively?
3. What crops do people cultivate in your hometown?
4. During a wedding, who escorts the bride to her new home?
5. Do your villagers do anything to expel evil during Lo sar?
6. Do itinerant merchants ever visit your village? What do they sell?
7. Do people in your village practice monogamy, polyandry, or something else?
8. Where is your mother's natal home?
9. Are houses in your village made out of rammed earth or something else? Tell me about them.
10. Do you know how to make sausages? Tell me.
11. What do families showcase in their homes in your village?
12. Which deities do people venerate in your village?

## WYLIE

Write the Tibetan for the Wiley, then check in the text.

Kan su'u	Shu mkhar chen
Co ne dpon po	Ltung gshags
<i>sngags chu</i>	<i>sha skal</i>
<i>rten 'brel</i>	<i>rlung rta</i>
<i>phye mar</i>	Ma mo'i bu dral
Legs lung	Ka chu
'Bru rdzi	<i>dge bshes</i>
Dpa' rgod	<i>g.yang 'bod</i>
<i>bsang yig</i>	<i>bsang khri</i>

## EXERCISES

Do these exercises, then check your answers in the text.

*bandit family horse people receipt village forest mountain feast*

\_\_\_\_\_ leaders selected ten or fifteen \_\_\_\_\_ from each village to transport taxes collected from each \_\_\_\_\_ to the Co ne Dpon po using mules, \_\_\_\_\_s, and yaks that were collectively owned by each village. It took three days of travel through dense \_\_\_\_\_s and over high rocky \_\_\_\_\_s to go from The bo to Co ne. Bears, tigers, and \_\_\_\_\_s were some of the challenges that could be met while travelling. After arriving in Co ne County, the transporters were warmly greeted and given a \_\_\_\_\_ by the Co ne Dpon po, who then gave a signed \_\_\_\_\_ to each village leader.

*turn herd cut reach say seem begin oink wiggle*

Old people and students \_\_\_\_\_ pigs with village herdsmen on the summer pasture. It takes about fifty minutes to \_\_\_\_\_ the summer pasture on foot. Summer weather is variable and a fine day may quickly \_\_\_\_\_ stormy. Locals \_\_\_\_\_ herding at sunrise. Pigs are released from the pigsty and \_\_\_\_\_ happily, wiggling their tails. Local people \_\_\_\_\_, "Wiggling tails is a pig's work. It \_\_\_\_\_s easy, but in fact it takes much energy. If they didn't \_\_\_\_\_ their tails, they would be even fatter." For this reason, some families \_\_\_\_\_ pigs' tails short when they are piglets, in hopes of increasing the pigs' weight in adulthood.

*but and because*

'Bru rdzi Village literally means 'Grain Protectors Village', \_\_\_\_\_ between 1958 and 1962, this township's residents farmed collectively \_\_\_\_\_ the community's grain was stored in 'Bru rdzi Village. The village had many granaries \_\_\_\_\_ was surrounded by a wall. The lower part of the wall was stone, \_\_\_\_\_ the upper part was rammed earth. The wall remains, \_\_\_\_\_ the granaries do not. ... 'Bru rdzi village, however, did not pay such taxes. 'Bru rdzi villager

Grags ba (b.1934) stated that about seventy years ago (~1938), Co ne Dpon po's solders killed many Muslims in the Ka chu region, near Lanzhou, \_\_\_\_\_ of religious differences and the Con ne Dpon po's desire to acquire more land. Soon after, the Chinese Nationalist Government decided to imprison Co ne Dpon po. Meanwhile, there was a man from 'Bru rdzi named Lha mo skyabs who bore a striking resemblance to Co ne Dpon po \_\_\_\_\_ acted as Co ne Dpon po's substitute in jail. 'Bru rdzi villagers were proud of him, \_\_\_\_\_ also saddened, as Lha mo skyabs never returned. Because of Lha mo skyabs's sacrifice, 'Bru rdzi villagers were exempt from paying grain taxes to Co ne Dpon po. Instead, they paid the same tax in the same amount to Lha mo skyabs's family. Today, the local community still shows respect to that family, offering *kha btags* \_\_\_\_\_ homemade liquor to his family's descendants on such special days as the *lab tse* festival \_\_\_\_\_ New Year.

As the clansmen eat bsatfkaer, young male family members go to the piytsq while the older men sharpen their knives. They slowly approach the pigs; if they arpophca quickly, the pig will bite them. The nebrmu of people who participate in this depends on how many pigs will be slaughtered; for eexlapm, four people go to the pigsty if there are four pigs. The men jpum into the pigsty and grab each pig's ears tightly from bednih. Someone with experience uses a stick to help these men slip a noose over the pig's head and adnuor its neck (the stick is used to extend the noose to the side opposite the man). The pigs are very fersuoico at this time and great caointu must be used to ensure that the men are not bitten. After fixing the noose, the man who has placed the nooses on the pig tosses the end of the rope over a rarfet, and pulls it up with the help of other men, raising the pig off the grdnuo. It dies qkcyliu if water is poured in its mhtou.

## CONTENT

1. Why didn't 'Bri dzi village need to pay taxes to the Co ne dpon po?
2. Tell me about pigs in 'Bri dzi Village.
3. What do you think is special or interesting about houses in 'Bri dzi Village?
4. What different religions are followed in upper and lower The bo?
5. What illnesses can stove deities cause? How?
6. Why do elders shout "*Zearo! Garo!*"?
7. How are pigs slaughtered?
8. Tell me about catching thrushes.
9. Can you summarize the *rten 'brel* songs?
10. Summarize the *bsang yig*.
11. Summarize the wedding process. What is unique about local weddings?
12. Look at the pictures at the end of the text and talk about them with your partner.

## BON SKOR VILLAGE LO SAR

Skal bzang skyid

### PART ONE: BON SKOR VILLAGE

The Tibetan agro-pastoralist community of Bon skor Village is located in the Welan Valley<sup>62</sup> in the southeast of Bya mdo Township, Mang ra County, Mtsho lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon Province, PR China. Mtsho lho is situated in east-central Mtsho sngon Province and is one of five Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures in Mtsho sngon Province. Mang ra County seat is in the east of Mtsho lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. The county is 158 kilometers from the prefecture capital and has six townships.<sup>63</sup> Bya mdo Township is 160 kilometers from the county town. There are seventeen villages in Bya mdo Township.<sup>64</sup>

Bon skor Village is fifteen kilometers from Bya mdo Township and is the only village in the township practicing both pastoralism and agriculture; other villages are entirely agricultural. Except for one Chinese village called Tsha rnga, all other villages are Tibetan. Bon skor Village's sole neighbor is Tsha rnga Village, which is seven kilometers to the east. Welan, Bon skor Village's farmland, is the community's gathering place for meetings and rituals. Residents otherwise live on the village's pastures: Smug pa'i thang, E rgod, and Sgyo sgang.

Smug pa'i thang is southwest of Bon skor and fifty kilometers from Welan. It is a large grassland with lush grass and many hillocks. The grassland is dark green but becomes yellow, dotted with gray, in autumn. Smug pa'i thang is a good pasture for horses, sheep, goats, cattle, and donkeys. The Yellow River flows slowly along one of the grassland's borders. It is transparent, so

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<sup>62</sup> Welan: Local Tibetans consider Welan to be a Mongol term. It has no meaning to local Tibetans. It refers to the valley where Bon skor Village's fields are located.

<sup>63</sup> Sum mdo, Thar shul, Mang ra, Mgo mang, Bya mdo, and Rab yog.

<sup>64</sup> Gyal rta khug, Thang nag, Sde mang, Gur lhe, Sdong ring, Kyog ra, Rrdza, Kor mdo, Sprel nag, Se thang, Ba lang gad pa, Gleg shing, Sdong gzhung, Shi nya, Tsha rnga, Dgon tang, and Bon skor.

stones can be seen in the water. Livestock water here in summer and autumn, but cannot in winter, because the river freezes.

The steep rocky slopes between the grassland and the river make reaching the Yellow River from Smug pa'i thang grassland difficult. Descending the slopes is easy but climbing back up is very hard. In summer, herders enjoy driving their livestock to water here, because the herders can swim in the river to cool off, wash their clothes, and play together while their livestock water. Herders arrive at the river in the morning and then rest on the banks. In the afternoon when the weather cools, they drive their herds back up the slope.

According to elders, there was much wildlife in Bon skor before 1955, including wild goats, wild sheep, and deer. However, when a large pasture for cavalry was established in Bon skor, the wild animal habitat was used intensively and the wildlife disappeared.

Elders recall that the Smug pa'i thang grassland was covered in fog in summer, and there was abundant rain, which explains how the pasture got its name, Smug pa'i thang, 'Foggy Land'. However, this name no longer describes the grassland correctly. It is now arid, with patches of desert. Spring is often windy, exacerbating desertification.

E rgod and Sgyo sgang are in the north of the village's territory and separated from each other by the shallow Mu dpor chu River. Ho yul, one of the village's previous pastures, is attached to the previous territory of Bon skor called Zhing kha zhol ma, 'Lower Farmland'. The soil is fertile in both areas. The area is now inundated by the Lung g.yang 'gag Reservoir. Ho yul and Sgyo sgang pastures are separated by the Zhing kha zhol ma Valley, which has been submerged since 1987. Bon skor Village was moved to its current location from Zhang kha zhol ma, consequently the village can no longer use Ho yul as pasture. Sgyo sgang continues to be used by Bon skor Village. These two pastures are suitable for raising goats, which typically climb grassy valleys and rocky cliffs to eat grass. These pastures have much *grama*, a bush goats eat. In spring, yellow flowers bloom on *grama* and at the end of summer the bushes are covered in many seeds resembling cardamom.

Sgyo sgang was formerly a place where Bon skor camels were kept. In 1958 villagers lost many livestock including camels

because of economic and civil turmoil. Afterwards, the number of livestock decreased and villagers kept only a few camels that were used for transport. As villagers gained access to tractors and motorcycles, as roads were built, and the grassland was divided among households, camels were rarely used. Locals do not eat camel meat because it is a taboo to eat zodiac animals and, according to a local legend, the camel is a compound body of all the zodiac animals – for example, the camel's tail was given by the pig and its teeth were given by the tiger. Villagers sold their camels after they became unnecessary.

In 2007, the village had approximately 340 households. All residents were Tibetan.

## I. LOCAL HISTORY

Bon skor community is the biggest village and has the longest history among the seventeen villages in Bya mdo Township. According to elders, the community has been in this area for 740 years. Long ago the area had few residents who tended sheep, goats, cows, and a few yaks. People lived in black tents year round. Normally, Tibetan black tents are made of yak hair. However, Bon skor Village tents were made of goat hair. Most Bon skor village households didn't have yaks because the climate and territory was not suitable for yaks. The weather was hot in summer and its many steep valleys were suitable only for raising goats. The local people admit that the quality of the tent probably was not as good as yak hair tents, because yak hair is stronger than goat hair, but they were proud of their extraordinary black tents and their numerous goats; some households had more than 1,000 goats.

At that time, some Bon skor villagers practiced Bon. One man living without a wife or children was considered a special person in the area, as he was an exorcist. His name was Bon rgan. He usually chanted to treat diseases for local people and is now believed to be the ancestor of all Bon skor villagers. Bon rgan fell in love with another man's wife, and took her to a place near Qinghai Lake. At that time, Mongols lived around the lake and it was a part of the Mongol Kingdom. This was during the reign of the nephew of Genghis Khan. Bon rgan and the woman lived near Qinghai Lake for several years and had three sons. They were



poor, but they had a good relationship with local Mongols and could communicate with them.

While Bon rgan was living with the Mongols, the sons of the local Mongol king repeatedly died from a mysterious illness. Once, yet another prince fell ill and the king was very sad. He invited many doctors to treat him but all the doctors lacked the necessary skills to cure the prince's disease. Then the king heard about an exorcist living in his territory and invited Bon rgan to his palace. Bon rgan skillfully cured the prince of his mysterious illness.

The Mongol king was very pleased and gave Bon rgan many sheep, camels, and Mongol servants, and offered Bon rgan a large tract of land, and so Bon rgan became a local chief. The three sons of Bon rgan matured and Bon rgan aged. Then, in accordance with a Tibetan saying, "*Bya rgas na tshang dran, Mi rgas na yul dran* Birds miss their nests and people miss their homes when they get older." Bon rgan yearned for his birthplace and wished to return to his natal home. He therefore gave up the land the Mongol king had given him and returned to his birthplace with his livestock, family, and Mongol servants.

After returning, his sons and the Mongol servants married local women. Bon rgan divided his territory and family and lived apart from his sons, giving rise to the A rigs and Bon po tribes.

Another possible explanation of the community's origin is that Tibetan and Mongols lived together and, after many years, the Mongols lost their language and traditions, or left for other places. However, the names of many places, especially valleys and slopes, of Bon skor areas are still in Mongol today, for example Wahandawa slope.

Prior to 1958, many Mongol and Tibetan tents were used in Bon skor. Mongol tents were made from sheep felt and Tibetan tents from goat hair. Afterwards, however, local people lost most of their property and their life became difficult. They no longer had materials to make Mongol tents. People forgot how to make those dwellings and nowadays, Bon skor villagers live in houses made of wood and brick.

## II. RELIGION

Bon skor Villagers followed Thon pa [Ston pa] gshen rab's Bon religion in the time of Bon rgan and spun prayer wheels in a counterclockwise direction and sacrificed animals to deities. However, Bon skor residents were converted to Buddhism by Bya mdo dge bshes and now follow Tibetan Buddhism. .

Bya mdo dge bshes (1885-1957) was a prestigious lama born in Bon skor. At the time of Bya mdo dge bshes, Bon skor Village was the only local community practicing Bon. Bya mdo dge bshes was a monk at Tsha rnga Monastery, which belonged to the Dge lugs pa (Yellow Sect) of Tibetan Buddhism, and visited many famous monasteries throughout Tibetan areas. He eventually became a knowledgeable and respected *dge bshes*. When he was about forty years old, Bya mdo dge bshes returned to Bon skor Village and gave many teachings, encouraging conversion of villagers to Tibetan Buddhism.

At first, the villagers resisted Bya mdo dge bshes. They ignored him and continued practicing Bon. However, his knowledge gradually attracted the locals' attention and, finally, they all converted to the Dge lugs pa sect. When Bya mdo dge bshes was dying he said, "Don't search for my next reincarnation. I will not return, I'm going to Nirvana."

Now, individual families have a room in their homes for a *mchod khang* 'shrine'. In the shrine they have Sakyamuni images and many other pictures of tutelary and guardian deities such as Dpal ldan lha mo, and Tibetan high lamas. On a shelf in front of the images there are always oil lamps or butter lamps burning, and seven copper bowls are filled with clean water daily. On the Buddha's birthday and such other special days as Lo sar 'New Year', villagers go to the temple of A myes yul lha, a local deity, to worship to avoid disease and bad luck.

Locals worship and make offerings to many different types of deities. *Chos skyong* are Guardian Deities, powerful beings who converted to Buddhism and guard the religion against malevolent forces. *Srung ma* 'Protector Gods' are included in *chos skyong*, however, every family and region has their own *srung ma*. In A mdo areas most Tibetans worship Dpal ldan lha mo, but certain families worship *the'u rang* 'goblins' as their *srung ma*.

Offerings are made to *yul lha* 'local gods' and *gzhi bdag*

'mountain gods' to obtain protection in this life. These beings are like friends. If they are ignored and only called upon in times of need, they will not co-operate. However, if you maintain a good relationship with *yul lha* and *gzhi bdag*, they can be relied upon whenever help is needed.

A MYES SGYO RI. A myes Sgyo ri is a Bon skor *yul lha*. The following account explains the origin of this deity:

Long ago a woman named A ma sbra lived alone in a black tent in Ho yul. She had no husband and no lover but, nonetheless, she became pregnant. No one, not even A ma sbra, knew who the unborn child's father was. She gave birth to a son and named him Sgyo ri. He was good at archery and very brave, as well as a magician while still very young.

A powerful Han man, called Rgya chu dkar mig lived on the banks of Yellow River. He was cruel and treated his subjects as slaves, forcing them to convert wild lands into fields irrigated by the Yellow River. Sgyo ri hated that man and looked for a chance to kill him and liberate his subjects. Rgya chu dkar mig knew his subjects might rebel, and wherever he went, he worried about his safety.

One day, when Rgya chu dkar mig was enjoying the sun, Sgyo ri appeared in the form of a deer and pretended to graze on the other side of the Yellow River at a place called Sgyo sgang. Rgya chu dkar mig asked his bodyguard, "Do you see any enemies nearby?" The bodyguard replied, "Except for a deer over there, there's nothing around." Just when Rgya chu dkar mig felt at ease, Sgyo ri fired an arrow right into the middle of his chest.

As Rgya chu dkar mig was dying he told his bodyguard, "Please! Throw my corpse into the Yellow River, and wherever the corpse washes up establish a Han village there in the future," and then he died.

Today, Rgya chu dkar mig's old castle is still visible as a big hollow in Sgyo sgang. Locals believe that when Sgyo ri saw that Rgya chu dkar mig was dead, he was pleased and jumped in the air. When he landed, his hip hit the ground making the big hollow. The trace of A ma sbra's tent can also be seen, as can the place where Rgya chu dkar mig forced his subjects to create fields. No matter how much time passes or how tall the grass grows, the

area that was once farmland is clearly visible.

A *lab tse* was built for Sgyo ri atop a hill in Sgyo sgang during Bon rgan's time. Bon rgan did many religious activities there, and Sgyo ri became a local god. Locals believe Sgyo ri remains inside the *lab tse* today. The *lab tse* was burned during the Cultural Revolution, but has since been renewed.

The eleventh day of the fourth lunar month and the nineteenth day of the seventh lunar month are special days for Bon skor villagers. Men renew that *lab tse* on these days.

KLU. *Klu* exist in plants which appear old and have striking shapes. Elders do not harm or kill wildlife, especially in valleys to the north of where *klu* live.

*Klu* live in springs, which are therefore kept clean. Blood should not drip into them, and frogs and snakes near the spring should not be hurt. This is because *klu* manifest themselves as such animals and, if they are angry, take revenge when people hurt them. If the spring becomes dirty, it will dry up. Sometimes villagers drop milk from red cows into the spring as an offering to the *klu*.

If *klu* are offended, offerings must be made according to a *bla ma* or *sngags pa*'s directions.

Offerings must also be given to *klu* when a drought strikes. *Bla ma* or *sngags pa* are invited to pray to the *klu* or sing around it to bring rain. It rains if these practitioners are capable.

### III. LANGUAGE

Certain elders born before 1930 use words that have no meanings in Tibetan. They say it is Mongol. For example, *haren*, means 'also'. Apart from a few words, they cannot speak Mongol. They speak A mdo Tibetan.

Selling livestock and making purchases requires villagers to make contact with Han or Hui businessmen. Consequently, most men speak the local Qinghai Chinese dialect. However, most local Tibetan women speak no Chinese because they stay at home doing family chores and herding.

Young locals and some students speak Tibetan mixed with Chinese. Students must go to the county town to attend senior and

junior high school where there are many Han students. They also watch movies in Chinese, which influences the languages they speak.

#### IV. TOPOGRAPHY AND TRANSPORT

Bon skor Village is southwest of Bya mdo Township. The Yellow River flows from the north part of the pastures, Sgyo sgang and Smug pa'i thang. The banks of the Yellow River have valleys and occasional massive sand dunes. According to elders, before the great famine of 1959 there was a big forest known as Rab yog nag along the Yellow River that was so dense the sun could not be seen through the leaves.

In 1959, the government brought prisoners from inner China during the great famine to cut down the forest and make fields. The river systems in the valleys were used to irrigate the fields through iron pipes. A Chinese town, Rab yog lin chang 'Rab yog Forest Station', was established. The government began building Lung g.yang 'gag Reservoir in about 1980. The villagers who lived on the banks of the river were asked to relocate from Zhang kha zhol ma Valley to the village's current location in Welan Valley. From 1983 to 1984, Rab yog lin chang was discontinued and Han people relinquished their fields and returned to their original homes. Some fields were covered by the Yellow River, while the other fields that were not submerged became desert. Around 2002, a policy to turn cropland to forest and pasture to grass was implemented and there have been subsequent efforts to reforest the sandy terrain. Trees that were planted are flourishing in irrigated areas and dying in areas lacking irrigation. Windy days have increased in these areas, especially in spring, and the desert grows ever larger. This wind damaged the nearby grassland and put the lives of many locals in a precarious situation until the government began implementing initiatives to protect the environment. However, full recovery of the natural environment remains doubtful.

Smug pa'i thang is at a comparatively high altitude and is cold in winter. It sometimes snows there continually for weeks. Herdsmen are then anxious that their grazing land will be covered by snow and livestock will have nothing to eat. During spring and

winter especially, herdsmen worry about their livestock and talk about the weather frequently.

Sgyo sgang has many valleys with rocky terrain, cliffs, small mountains, and desert slopes. Before 2006, there were no paths for motorcycles. Villagers went there on foot, and it took a day to walk there from the farming area. If they needed to bring supplies to the herding area, they loaded them on camels or donkeys. Recently however, the villagers built a path for motorcycles

Smug pa'i thang is level and transport is relatively convenient. Locals travel in small trucks to their herding households. Some families have small trucks that they use to earn money transporting livestock to Mgo mang Township town to sell.

## V. CLOTHING

Nowadays, young people in Bon skor Village wear Tibetan robes only for such special occasions as Lo sar and weddings. They wear modern clothes in daily life. However, older people always wear Tibetan robes. Most villagers wear *tsha ru*<sup>65</sup> during Lo sar, because this type of clothing is very warm. They also wear *phrug* at this time.<sup>66</sup> The elderly wear Tibetan cloth robes and sheepskin.

## VI. TELECOMMUNICATIONS

The government brought electricity to farming households in Welan Valley after Bon skor Village resettled there. Now, most families have a TV, refrigerator, and telephone. In 2006, mobile phones also became available. However, there is still no internet or postal service.

There is no electricity in Bon skor's herding areas. Since 1996, a few households have been able to buy solar electricity panels in Xining. Mobile phone service is also limited in herding areas. People must take their cell phones to the tops of mountains and hills to get a stronger signal.

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<sup>65</sup> *Tsha ru* is a Tibetan robe, the inside of which is made of lambskins.

<sup>66</sup> *Phrug* is a Tibetan robe made of dense, dark red wool.

## PART TWO: LO SAR

Bon skor celebrates Lo sar from the first till the fifteenth day of the first Chinese lunar month, which is called Rgya lo.

Locals make many preparations the month before Lo sar, which is called Bod lo. Mgo mang Township is visited and cigarettes, liquor, candies, fireworks, crystal sugar, beer, peanuts, vegetables, and clothes are bought.

Families spend 800-1,000 RMB in preparation for Lo sar. Rich families spend more money and poor families buy less.

### I. HOUSECLEANING

The nineteenth day of Bod lo is the designated day to clean houses. Smaller items are moved out of the house while large furniture remains in the home and is covered by plastic to protect it from dust while the ceiling is cleaned. Some people cover their heads and faces except for their eyes, fearing that dust will enter their mouth and nose. They use *rtsi to*<sup>67</sup> brooms to sweep the ceiling and walls, and scrub the floor. Then everything that was taken outside is put back in the house and rearranged.

After cleaning, all the trash, including the brooms used to sweep the floor, are put together in a big bag and thrown away. Elders tell youths not to make a mistake in the direction in which trash is discarded and the time at which it is discarded. At sunset, one person carries it and throws it away at a place where the roof of their own house cannot be seen and also in the opposite direction of Lo lha's<sup>68</sup> seat, which changes every year. The person who discards the trash should chant while outside the home. When they return, there should be yak dung in their bag. They should not bring an empty bag.

### II. THE TWENTY- FIFTH OF BOD LO

The twenty-fifth day of Bod lo is used to renew the *bsang khri* 'offering altar', which is made of brick and soil. Every home has

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<sup>67</sup> *Rtsi to* is a kind of long grass used to make brooms.

<sup>68</sup> Lo lha is the 'God of the Year'.

one or two *bsang khri*. One is in the courtyard, and the other is some distance from the house, ideally atop a hill near the home. A woman from the home makes fresh clay to put on the old altar and paints it with white soil.

### III. FOUR DAYS BEFORE LO SAR

*Gor dmar* 'red bread' is made two or three days before Lo sar. A family uses around fifteen kilograms of dough to make it. Neighbors help each other making various fried-breads.

Leavened dough is prepared the night before the bread making day. The next morning, women make dough and pour oil into a pot to heat. After the oil begins to bubble, the dough is cut into small pieces and flattened with rolling pins. A knife is used to make the pieces into round shapes which are put into the boiling oil for about ten seconds.

Three types of bread are made: *leb tse*, which is small and flat, *sog sog*, which is long, thin, and braid-like, and *chos mdun*, which is offered in front of the deity and lama images in the family shrine. *Leb tse* and *sog sog* are made to eat during Lo sar and are offered to guests whereas *chos mdun* is made only as an offering. To make these offerings, small dough pieces are flattened and then cut into the shapes of zodiac animals, though someone who is skillful might make three-dimensional representations. The *chos mdun* are then placed carefully in the oil to ensure that they do not break. They are removed from the oil and put in a clean, washed dish. People avoid touching them in order to ensure the offerings' purity. On the first day of Lo sar, *chos mdun* are placed in front of the images in the shrine, and each piece of *chos mdun* is daubed with a small piece of butter. After Lo sar, they are burnt on the *bsang khri*.

Steamed and boiled *tshon ma* 'dumplings' are made. Both types contain mutton and cabbage. After being made, *tshon ma* are put in a refrigerator or in a cold place.



#### IV. THE TWENTY-NINTH NIGHT OF BOD LO

The twenty-ninth night of Bod lo is called *dgu rgyags* 'nine-full'. Everybody should eat nine bowls of noodles or nine different kinds of food, including meat. Family members urge each other to eat more than usual.

At the end of every year, Gshin rje chos rgyal ma 'the God of Death' weighs people during at the night. The heavier one is, the better. The God of Death considers this to be the weight of one's virtue, rather than of one's body. If a person's virtue is underweight and their evildoing is overweight, then the God of Death punishes them by sending them to Hell.

#### V. THE NIGHT BEFORE LO SAR

After *dgu rgyags* celebrations, if there is a thirtieth day in Bod lo, then after the meal people go to bed. If there is no thirtieth day, family members begin making food decorations, red bread, and *tshon ma* after dinner. Fruit and crystal sugar are stacked in three or four large basins or plates as offerings to Lo sar guests. These plates are put in the center of tables. Table corners are usually decorated with smaller plates of food. Bottles of liquor are put with food offerings on the table and *chos mdun* are put in front of images in the family's shrine. Next, elders and children go to sleep until dawn. Children like to get up around two a.m. to make Lo sar visits, but parents may not allow them to do so, especially if the weather is very cold. Parents tell children to make Lo sar visits in the afternoon, but children rarely listen. Adults may not sleep because they are busy preparing for Lo sar visits and other activities. They wash their hair and put on new clothes. Males prepare *bsang*.<sup>69</sup>

#### VI. THE FIRST DAY OF LO SAR

Just before midnight on the twenty-ninth or thirtieth of Bod lo, males make a fire with yak and sheep dung on the *bsang khri*. In order to treat the deities in the most hospitable way at midnight,

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<sup>69</sup> *Bsang* is food offered to gods.

they set off firecrackers and blow white conch shells to announce the *bsang* offering and to welcome the New Year. The family that makes *bsang* the fastest will be blessed with success in the coming year.

Normally, *bsang* is made of *rtsam pa* and juniper but, on the first day of Lo sar, candy, apples, deep-fried breads, and other vegetarian foods are added to the *bsang*.

Around six a.m., all family members get up, put on new clothes, and gather to drink *Lo ja*.<sup>70</sup> After *lo ja*, family members give candies and bottles of alcohol as gifts to friends and relatives. Most visit homes with elderly people or families who have had a death in the past year. Otherwise, visitors arbitrarily visit every household in the village. Men and children especially enjoy visiting. Women visit only after the first day of Lo sar. Young women dislike visiting because they worry others will think that they are neglecting their domestic duties.

When visitors reach a household's gate, they yell, "Lo sar *bzang*!"<sup>71</sup> Family members come out quickly and say, "Lo sar *bzang*!" to welcome their visitors. Visitors are seated around the Lo sar food decorations and are offered milk tea. They sit, enjoy the food, make jokes with each other, and sing Tibetan songs. In many cases, the visitors are forced to sing by the host family. People who cannot sing or are shy are detained by their hosts until they sing. Consequently people who cannot sing are reluctant to make Lo sar visits. When guests are about to leave, the host family gives them candy or fruit.

Most male visitors now ride motorcycles to visit households on the first day of Lo sar and return home around five p.m. Many are drunk when they return home. Some travel to many households and do not return home for several days or even weeks.

## VII. THE SECOND DAY OF LO SAR

The second day of Lo sar is more relaxed than the first. No visitors come at night. Doing so is prohibited. Every family is tired from the previous day's activities and rests. A few visitors are received by households on the second day of Lo sar.

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<sup>70</sup> 'Lo sar tea'.

<sup>71</sup> "Happy New Year!"

## VIII. THE THIRD DAY OF LO SAR

On the morning of the third day, *tshe thar*<sup>72</sup> is performed. A sheep, goat, or other animal is designated as *tshe tar* for the mountain deities and protector deities. Such livestock are recognized as holy and are allowed to die naturally, rather than being killed for food. The animal is held tightly while a wool amulet or a protective substance made of braided wool is tied on the animal's left shoulder. Meanwhile, the names of local deities are called and verses praising the gods are recited. Local deities are beseeched to bring good luck to the family in the coming year. It is important to offer an animal that has nicely colored fur and shapely horns. If such an animal cannot be located, the ritual is not held.

## IX. THE FOURTH DAY OF LO SAR AND AFTERWARDS

There are no specific rituals from the fourth day of Lo sar onwards. Villagers continue visiting, but the numbers of visits decrease as the days pass. Most visitors at this time are relatives who live far away.

The fifth, eleventh, and fifteenth days are considered ideal for weddings.

The sixth and seventh days of Lo sar are *nyin nag*,<sup>73</sup> so villagers stay at home. After these days, the villagers continue to enjoy celebrations until the last day of Lo sar, which is the fifteenth day of the first lunar month. People bid farewell to Lo sar and those who have free time, especially elders, visit the *ma Ni* hall to chant.

Livestock in the pastures require attention during Lo sar and those who herd at this time are chosen in turn. Certain locals who do not enjoy Lo sar are willing to herd during Lo sar each year.

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<sup>72</sup> The ritual that liberates animals from man-made death.

<sup>73</sup> 'Black days'.

## MAP

## Map of Bya mdo Township



## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

- A mdo ཨ་མདོ། \*place  
 A myes sgyo ri ཨ་མེས་སྒྱུ་རི། \*mountain/deity  
 Bon rgyan བོན་རྒྱལ། \*person  
 Bon skor བོན་སྐོར། \*village  
*bsang khri* བསང་ཁྲི། altar  
 Bya mdo བྱ་མདོ། \*place  
*chos mdun* ཆོས་མདུན། kind of bread  
*dge bshes* དག་བཤེས། highly educated monk  
*dgu rgyags* དགུ་རྒྱུགས། the twenty-ninth of the twelfth lunar month  
 Dpal ldan lha mo དཔལ་ལྷན་ལྷ་མོ། \*deity  
*gro ma* གྲོ་མ། yam  
 Gshin rje chos rgyal གཤིན་རྗེ་ཆོས་རྒྱལ། the god of death  
*gzhi bdag* གཞི་བདག། local deity  
 Ho yul ཧོ་ཡུལ། \*place  
*klu* ལྷ། naga  
*lab rtse* ལ་རེ། mountain deity altar  
*leb tse* ལེབ་རེ། kind of bread  
*linchang* 林场 forest station  
*lo ja* ལོ་ཇ། Lo sar tea  
 Mang ra མང་ར། \*place  
 Mtsho lho མཚོ་ལྷོ། \*place  
 Mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྒོན། \*place  
*nyin nag* ཉིན་ནག། black day  
*phrug* ཕུག། a type of robe  
*rab yog* རབ་ཡོག། \*place  
*rgya lo* རྒྱ་ལོ། Chinese year  
*rtsi to* རྩི་རྟོ། grass used to make a broom  
 Sgyo sgang སྒྱུ་སྐང། \*place  
 Smug pa'i thang སྤུག་པའི་ཐང། \*place

*sngags pa* བླ་མ་པ་། tantric practitioner

*sog sog* སོག་སོག་ kind of bread

Ston pa gshen rab ལྷན་པ་གཤེན་རབ་། \*person

Tsha rnga ཚ་རྩ་། \*place

*tsha ru* ཚ་རུ་། lamb skin robe

*tshe thar* ཚེ་ཐར་། animal freed from man-caused death

*tshon ma* ཚོན་མ་། dumplings

Zhing kha zhol ma ཞིང་ཁ་ཞོལ་མ་། \*place

WRITE NEW VOCABULARY HERE

WRITE YOUR EVALUATION HERE



## VOCABULARY

Ask these questions to a partner.

1. Does your hometown have abundant rainfall?
2. Do you wear an amulet?
3. What kind of person needs a bodyguard?
4. Which direction do you circumambulate – clockwise or counterclockwise?
5. If you are at the top of a mountain, do you need to ascend or descend to go home?
6. What domestic duties do you have when you visit your family?
7. Are there any exorcists in your village?
8. What is the habitat of the snow leopard?
9. Do villagers in your hometown irrigate their fields?
10. Can you get a strong cell phone signal in your hometown?

## WYLIE

Write the Tibetan and then check in the text.

Gshin rje chos rgyal	<i>bsang khri</i>
Dpal ldan lha mo	Smug pa'i thang
Mtsho lho	Mtsho sngon
Zhing kha zhol ma	Ston pa gshen rab
<i>tsha ru</i>	<i>nyin nag</i>
<i>lo ja</i>	<i>klu</i>
Smug pa'i thang	<i>chos mdun</i>
<i>dgu rgyags</i>	A myes sgyo ri

## EXERCISES

Do these exercises, then check your answers in the text.

The steep rocky slopes \_\_\_\_\_ the grassland and the river make reaching the Yellow River \_\_\_\_\_ Smug pa'i thang grassland difficult. Descending the slopes is easy but climbing back \_\_\_\_\_ is very hard. \_\_\_\_\_ summer, herders enjoy driving their livestock \_\_\_\_\_ water here; because the herders can swim \_\_\_\_\_ the river to cool \_\_\_\_\_, wash their clothes, and play \_\_\_\_\_ their livestock water. Herders arrive \_\_\_\_\_ the river in the morning and then rest \_\_\_\_\_ the banks. \_\_\_\_\_ the afternoon when the weather cools, they drive their herds back \_\_\_\_\_ the slope.

In 1959, the goentemnrv brought prisoners from inner China during the great famine to cut down the fotser and make fields. The river systems in the valleys were used to irretagi the fields through iron pipes. A Chinese town, Rab yog ling chang 'Rab yog Forest Station', was esedhsilbat. The government began building Lung g.yang 'gag Reservoir in about 1980. The villagers who lived on the bkns of the river were asked to reletaco from Zhang kha zhol ma Valley to the village's current locnoita in Welan Valley. From 1983 to 1984, Rab yog lin chang was discontinued and Han people relinquished their fields and returned to their orlanigi homes. Some fields were covered by the Yellow River, while the other fields that were not submerged became dtrese. Around 2002, a policy to turn cropland to forest and pasture to grass was imnetmdeelp and there have been subsequent efforts to reforest the sandy terrain. Tesre that were planted are flourishing in irrigated areas and dying in areas lacking irrigation. Windy days have increased in these areas, eslylaicep in spring, and the desert grows ever larger. This wind damaged the neybra grassland and put the lives of many locals in a precarious siointaut until the government began implementing initiatives to prcetto the environment. However, full recovery of the natural enortnemniv remains doubtful.

After cleaning, all the trash, including the brooms used to sweep the floor, are \_\_\_\_\_ together in a big bag and \_\_\_\_\_ away. Elders \_\_\_\_\_ youths not to \_\_\_\_\_ a mistake in the direction in which trash is discarded and the time at which it is discarded. At sunset, one person \_\_\_\_\_ it and \_\_\_\_\_ it away at a place where the roof of their own house cannot be seen and also in the opposite direction of Lo lha's seat, which \_\_\_\_\_ every year. The person who discards the trash should \_\_\_\_\_ while outside the home. When they \_\_\_\_\_, there should \_\_\_\_\_ yak dung in their bag; they should not \_\_\_\_\_ an empty bag.

On the morning of the third day, *tshe thar* is (perform/performed). A sheep, goat, or other animal is (designate/designated) as *tshe tar* for the mountain deities and protector deities. Such livestock are (recognize/recognized) as holy and allowed to (die/died) naturally, rather than being (kill/killed) for food. The animal is (hold/held) tightly while a wool amulet or a protective substance (make/made) of braided wool is (tie/tied) on the animal's left shoulder. Meanwhile, the names of local deities are (call/called) and verses praising the gods are (recite/recited). Local deities are (beseech/beseeched) to (bring/brought) good luck to the family in the coming year. It is important to (offer/offered) an animal that (has/had) nicely colored fur and shapely horns. If such an animal cannot be (locate/located), the ritual is not (hold/held).

## CONTENT

1. Why do villagers use some Mongol words?
2. Talk about the village's pastures.
3. Talk about Bon rgan and Bya mdo dge shes do.
5. What different types of deity are venerated in Bon skor? Do people venerate such deities in your hometown?
6. What different types of bread are prepared for Lo sar?
7. Talk about Gshin rje chos rgya ma.
8. Why do villagers compete to make *bsang* as fast as they can?
9. Why are some people reluctant to make Lo sar visits?
10. Talk about *tshe thar*. Are you familiar with this ritual?
12. What things are interesting or special about Bon skor and the New Year festivities there?

# A HERDERS' NEW YEAR IN SKU NANG VILLAGE

Bsod nams dung mtsho

## PART ONE: VILLAGE LIFE IN SKU NANG VILLAGE

Sku nang Village is a Tibetan herder community located in Lha sgang Township (Dar mdo County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, China). Culturally, the village is part of the Khams region, though it borders on A mdo. On an east-west axis, Dkar mdzes is situated in the middle of the Tibetan areas of Sichuan Province. Dar mdo County is one of the eighteen counties<sup>74</sup> of Dkar mdzes Prefecture. Lha sgang is twelve hours away by bus from Dar mdo County Town.

### I. VILLAGE NAME AND HISTORY

Sku nang Village is also known as Sku nub. Local elders say that some time in the early eighteenth century, a monk called Kun bza' chos grub rgya mtsho planned to find a place to build a monastery. He was born in Bde cha, ninety kilometers east of Sku nang, and spent most of his life engaged in religious practice in remote caves.

One day Kun bza' chos grub rgya mtsho set off to find a place to build a monastery. After a long trip on foot, he reached a place with a big rock on which to rest. The place was incredibly beautiful; flowers and grass were everywhere. With his bags slung over his shoulder, Kun bza' chos grub rgya mtsho sat on the rock. The upper part of the rock softened and his body sank in. He thought, "It is important to have auspicious signs when beginning something new," and felt there was something special about that occurrence and that place. So, he asked local people to help build a monastery, which came to be called Sku nub Monastery. *Sku* means 'body' and *nub* means 'sank'. The monastery was built just behind the rock where Kun bza' chos grub rgya mtsho had sat.

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<sup>74</sup> The eighteen counties are Dar rtse mdo, Lcags zam kha, Rong brag, Brgyad zur, Nyag chu kha, Li thang, 'Ba' thang, Phyag phreng, 'Dab pa, Sde rong, Rta'u, Brag 'go, Dkar mdzes, Nyag rong, Dpal yul, Sde dge, Gser shul, and Gser rta.

Afterwards, local people built winter houses near the monastery so that they could visit often. The monastery was destroyed in 1958, but the place name did not change and the story of its origins was remembered. Around 1976, locals rebuilt the monastery in its original location. Sku nub is considered difficult to pronounce, so later people started calling the place Sku nang, which has no particular meaning known to local people.

There are sixty households in Sku nang, each with about eight people. People herd yaks and horses. People also exchange skins for salt and furs for tea bricks. Meat, butter, and cheese are also sold to generate cash income. The average annual income is 1,200 RMB.

People from Sku nang marry herders and farmers from various villages in Lha sgang Township, all within a thirty minute ride on horseback. There were only forty households in Sku nang before 1939, but that number had increased to sixty in 1968. Matrilocal, patrilocal, and neolocal post-marital residence are all practiced, with patrilocal marriages being the most common. All marriages are monogamous.

Families in Sku nang have a tent in the summer pasture and a winter house. In the fourth lunar month, they begin moving to their summer pasture. They move repeatedly over the next six months to avoid over-grazing. Blankets, quilts, *rtsam pa*,<sup>75</sup> rice, wheat flour, and cooking utensils are taken to their summer pasture. In the ninth lunar month they return to their winter houses.

People herd wherever they want within village territory, but individual families have certain places surrounded by barbed wire where grass for winter fodder is protected from livestock. These individual lands are only around four or five *mu*<sup>76</sup> in area, so people have adequate space to herd freely in surrounding pastures. An average household has seventy yaks and four horses; locals do not herd sheep. Families who have around 140 yaks and six horses are considered rich. Families considered poor have around twenty-five yaks and two horses.

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<sup>75</sup> *Rtsam pa* refers to barley flour, and the same flour mixed with butter, cheese, sugar, and tea.

<sup>76</sup> One *mu* = about 0.07 hectares.

## II. RELIGION

Most villagers follow the Rnying ma pa Sect of Tibetan Buddhism, and visit Sku nub Monastery, the local Rnying ma pa monastery, to worship and circumambulate on special occasions, including the fifth day of each lunar month and the birth and death days of Sakyamuni Buddha. People also visit to listen to religious teachings, during which lamas explain the disadvantages of smoking, drinking, gambling, lying, and killing, and how these things prevent enlightenment. Such religious teachings are held every year, though there is no fixed schedule for them.

Fasting is observed once or twice a year. People believe fasting prevents re-birth in the world of hungry ghosts or animals. However, because herders have much heavy labor, they do not often fast. Some elders around the age of eighty live permanently near the monastery in order to visit it often.

Villagers invite monks or lamas from the monastery to chant on such occasions as weddings or when beginning a business trip or pilgrimage. People also ask advice from lamas about herding and trading yaks, and seek medical advice from monks in the monastery clinic. People can get such treatments as blood-letting, moxibustion, and Tibetan herbal medicine pills from the monks.

Monks sometimes chant for a few days in order to cure people's illnesses. If villagers are worried that hail and snow may come to devastate their livestock, they ask monks to chant in order to augment their luck and prevent disasters. When it has not rained for a long time, villagers again ask monks for help. There are special chants to prevent disasters and help bring rainfall, and these are commonly chanted in the monastery. Locals think these chants are special, but only monks know their names. In dire circumstances, certain accomplished monks go to the peak of a local mountain near the holy peak, Shar stod bzhag bkra dkar po, and chant there. Locals believe these lamas talk to the mountain deities and can persuade them to help villagers.

All villagers dream of visiting the sacred city of Lha sa at some point in their lives; visiting India is another dream. However, few people achieve either dream, for work is too demanding and both destinations are far away. Only five people from Sku nang village have been to Lha sa. If people prostrate to Lha sa it takes a

year. When setting off, they bring food. When this food is finished, pilgrims beg for food and sometimes ask for accommodation if it rains. People may die from exhaustion, cold, and hunger on the journey.

Individual families have their own *mchod khang*, 'shrine,' in their house at the permanent winter camp. Wealthier families have a separate room in which to make religious offerings, but most villagers only have one big room. They keep calves near the door of this room. The family shrine is in the inner-most part of this room, in the area where people cook and sleep. Most herders live on the grassland in summer and often move to new pastures and thus they have few images and pictures, mostly of White Tara, Green Tara, and Sakyamuni Buddha, the Enlightened One, in the inner part of the tent. People also have images of such locally important lamas as Bag gnas sprul sku and Jog thang. Offerings are made to local deities, but there are no pictures or images of mountain deities in their shrines.

There are four important mountains near Sku nang that locals believe were once people with special abilities. No villagers know the names of the people who later became mountain deities to protect people and their environment. Three mountains are located together and are believed to be a family. Between Shar stod bzhag bkra dkar po (a male), and Bzhag mo (a female) is a third smaller mountain, which is considered to be the son of the other two mountains, who are a couple. This third mountain has no name other than Zhu lu (the son). Another mountain, 'Pos gangs dkar, is one kilometer from the other three. Before Bzhag mo married Shar stod bzhag bkra dkar po, she loved 'Pos gangs dkar. Bzhag mo was planning to marry 'Pos gangs dkar, but Shar stod bzhag bkra dkar po objected and shot an arrow at her, cutting off the upper part of her body. Today, the top of Bzhag mo Mountain is flat.

### III. LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION

All Sku nang villagers are A mdo dialect speakers, whereas nearby farmers speak Khams dialect. The township is a thirty-five minute horse-ride from the village and most of the people there speak Khams dialect. Due to long-term contact, local Khams and A mdo speakers understand one another fully. Han and Hui people butcher

sheep and operate restaurants and shops in the township. Consequently, Sku nang villagers, especially men, speak some Sichuan Chinese dialect.

In the past, villagers sent their sons to monasteries to become monks if that was their son's wish. Daughters were traditionally kept at home to do house work; few were sent to school. Monasteries were considered a good place for sons to learn to read and write Tibetan and become educated.

Farmers from the township began sending their children to school after the township primary school was built in 1983, but few herders did so, since herding is labor intensive and requires many laborers. Girls were still kept at home to do chores and boys were still sent to monasteries.

Starting in about 2000, Rdo rje bkra shis, 'Brug dga', and other lamas from local monasteries built four schools in the township town and other nearby places, where Tibetans could send their children for free. As a result, more children have started attending school. Still, many children stay at home to help parents do housework. These schools ask Chinese teachers from cities in lowland China to teach Chinese, mathematics, and other subjects. Tibetan teachers teach Tibetan. Some schools provide primary education and some offer secondary education.

#### IV. CLOTHING AND HOUSING

Young Sku nang children generally wear modern clothing. Women wear Tibetan robes in daily life and men wear both Tibetan and modern clothes when they work. During Lo sar, weddings, and local festivals, they wear *tsha ru*, 'sheep skin,' dark-red Tibetan robes, *snam bu*, *phrug*, and *'bu ras*. *'Bu ras* is white cloth used to make pants and shirts worn on special occasions. In the past, both *tsha ru* and *phrug* were stitched with otter skin on the bottom edge, but in 2006, a powerful Buddhist teaching resulted in animal skins no longer being worn. Many families detached otter skin from their robes and burned it. Such robes were for cold winter weather and cost several thousand RMB to make. Consequently, many families could not afford them. *Ras lwa* is a very common, simple Tibetan robe that all villagers wear during warm seasons.

Family homes have a square courtyard about 700 square



meters in area, surrounded by stone walls about three meters high. One of the four sides has a *rgya sgo*, 'gate'. Livestock are kept in the courtyard at night. People keep dried yak dung and firewood in a small mud house called *lcu khang* in the courtyard. Wealthier families have rooms made of stone and earth in which they keep calves and horses that the family values, especially the horses that they race.

Until around 1968, villagers lived in one-room pitched-roofed houses made of adobe, stone, and poplar wood. Older family males designed the houses and built them with other male relatives and, occasionally, females. Villagers collected stones from local mountain slopes and certain skilled village men made them into square tiles that were then put on the roof. There were no separate rooms in most houses; families had a shrine, stove, table, and wood storage boxes inside the one room.

Local tents are around twelve meters long. Usually the tent is made of yak hair, which is very durable and does not easily become tattered. Rips and tears in the tent's roof are repaired but, if the sides tear, they are replaced with new woven yak-hair panels. There is a stove in the center of the tent and a few beds on each side of the tent. Elders sit on one side of the stove and younger people sit on either side, though the specific side is not fixed. The upper part of the tent is piled with bags of barley flour for summer consumption. Tents have no furniture because the tent is frequently moved.

## V. CULTURAL INTERACTION AND CHANGE

Geographic location and convenient transportation allow for frequent interaction between Sku nang villagers and the dominant Han Chinese culture. Electricity came to the village around 1990 and access to TV and VCDs was common around 2000. Radios were widespread in the early 1990s. Village homes have easy access to multiple Chinese language television channels; people also watch VCDs and listen to Chinese radio stations. They lack access to foreign stations. In winter houses, families spend three or four hours every night watching TV and VCDs. The summer pasture lacks electricity for TV and VCD players, but people still listen to portable, battery-powered radios. In these circumstances,

singing, story-telling, and chanting are more frequent. However, young people have little interest in hearing folktales, stories, and songs from their parents and grandparents.

Some villagers living in the township town have tractors or cars purchased in the early 1990s. Male villagers living on the grassland often ride motorcycles, which first appeared in the area in 2003. The village is only a thirty minute horse-ride from the township town but, on motorcycle, the township can be reached in ten minutes.

The total township population of 8,000 includes Han Chinese and Tibetans. Younger people do not wear traditional Tibetan clothes and seldom speak Tibetan in daily life. They speak Tibetan with their family members, but usually speak Chinese with Han and Tibetan peers. Elders die without passing on traditional knowledge to younger generations. Local Tibetans no longer take part in traditional religious practices and festivals, including fasting, chanting, and circumambulating sacred mountains.

## PART TWO: LO SAR

### I. TIMING AND INITIAL PREPARATIONS

Most Tibetan areas traditionally celebrate Lo sar according to the Bod lo 'Tibetan calendar'. The first month of the Tibetan calendar generally begins around the twelfth day of the second month of the Chinese lunar calendar. In Sku nang, Lo sar is celebrated from the first day to the fifteenth day of the first Tibetan lunar month.

During twenty days of pre-Lo sar activity, township and county towns are visited to purchase liquor, tea bricks, candy, meat, and new clothing. Food is very important during Lo sar. People say, "*Lo sar ni za dang dga' ba'i dus*, Lo sar is a time to eat and be merry." Village men go to nearby monasteries to make prayer flags on the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth lunar month, spend two days there to finish the printing, and later offer these flags to local mountain deities. Monasteries have carved wood blocks that families borrow during Lo sar to print scriptures on cloth. Men also go to forests for one or two days to cut juniper for all villagers. There are small forests near the summer pastures, but often men go to Lha sgang Township where there are large forests

with more juniper. These men ride horses and take six to nine yaks with them to haul the juniper back.

Locals begin shopping approximately twenty days before Lo sar; there are no specific dates for shopping. Food preparations depend on a family's economic condition. If a poor family buys twenty bottles of liquor, a wealthy family buys forty-five bottles. Most villagers lack cash to buy candies and liquor, so they trade butter, cheese, milk, and yak skins. All food is prepared before Lo sar. Most villagers finish shopping before the twenty-eighth day of the twelfth lunar month.

## II. HOUSE CLEANING AND FOOD

The twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth days of the twelfth month are days to bathe and clean the house and clothes. Most villagers clean on the twenty-ninth day, but wealthy and large families start cleaning on the twenty-eighth day, as they have more to clean. People move furniture outside and then sweep and scrub the ceiling, walls, floor, adobe stove, and so on. Cleaning away all the soot and dirt is important during Lo sar, and every family strives to do it well. Families also need to wash their dirty clothes. Everything must be thoroughly cleaned. After the house is cleaned, villagers move their furniture back inside.

After the house cleaning, all the refuse is piled together and thrown away. Brooms that were used to clean the house are put on the refuse pile and a big stone is placed a top it. There is no special direction in which to throw the garbage, but it must be discarded at the intersection of three valleys. Such places are usually near the home. Traditionally, people think that throwing away garbage is like throwing away a *gtor ma* 'dough effigy' – it discards bad luck and misfortune.

Usually, housewives and young women spend an entire day cleaning. The soot on the ceiling is particularly difficult to clean away, while other cleaning is comparatively easy.

People usually wash their hair in nearby streams and rivers on the twenty-ninth day. After around seven p.m. on the same day, when all family members are present, noodles are cooked by women. These *dgu thug* 'nine noodles' feature nine different ingredients: water, meat, potato, flour, salt, oil, butter, cheese, and

vegetables. Special objects are added to the noodles. Villagers make different dough shapes including a man holding a gun, a rabbit, a sun, a moon, a bag, a scripture book, and a mouse. Grass, salt, hair, chili, and yak dung are also rolled into balls of flour, and then roasted on the metal stove-top, along with the aforementioned ingredients. The balls are put in the noodles when they are hard. People make predictions based on which contents end up in a person's bowl. A man holding a gun means one is brave; a rabbit signifies intelligence; a sun means one will help many people; the moon symbolizes arrogance and ignorance of others' suffering; a bag means lack of desire for property and wealth; scriptures indicate knowledge; the mouse means one is a thief; grass indicates emotional instability; salt suggests an amicable nature; hair suggest good manners and chili suggest a fiery, easily angered nature.

Noodles are cooked with great care to encourage people to eat more. Good noodles should have equal amounts of meat, butter, vegetables, potato, and cabbage. Bad noodles have little meat and no vegetables. Families also bring dogs into the house to eat noodles, which is unusual, as dogs are not normally given the same food as people. That night, parents, uncles, sisters, and brothers gather to dance, sing, and joke.

On the thirtieth day, fried and baked bread, *gro ma*,<sup>77</sup> and *thud* are prepared early in the morning. Yak-milk cheese is put in a big pot and mixed with solid butter and sugar to make *thud*. Much butter is required to stick the ingredients together to make square and triangular shapes.

At the same time, *gro thud*, 'wheat soup', is cooked with beef and yak bones. It is boiled for an entire day, as this improves the flavor and brings luck. The ingredients are barley, meat, potato, vegetables, butter, and cheese.

After finishing the soup, male family members use a clean cloth and white ash and paint the Eight Auspicious Symbols on their ceilings, walls, and doors. People finish eating at around ten p.m. Elderly people and children go to bed after dinner, and the wife and husband put display foods on the table that night. Everything should be clean and tidy before midnight.

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<sup>77</sup> *Gro ma* is a small, black or dark red root. Villagers boil it and eat it with yak butter.

### III. THE FIRST DAY OF LO SAR

The first day is the most important day of Lo sar, for whatever one does on that day affects the coming New Year. Those born in the zodiac year of the New Year will fetch water after midnight. Each family should have someone who does it. If a family lacks a member born in the same zodiac year, someone whose zodiac year is in the same group as the New Year's zodiac sign can collect the water.<sup>10</sup>

Villagers dress in their best attire on this day; nobody is allowed to wear their normal old clothes. After getting up, a fire must be built. The night before, people prepare very dry grass and bushes to set fire to the next morning. The fire should ignite with three puffs at most. If the fire ignites with one puff, it means the family will be very lucky that year; all their work will be completed successfully, and no death or misfortune will befall them. If the fire ignites on the second puff, the family will do well in their endeavors. If the fire ignites on the third puff, nothing especially bad or good will occur. If the fire does not ignite by the third puff, it is believed many bad things will happen to the family, such as illness, death, and other misfortunes.

The person who lights the fire also fetches water for the whole family, from the river near the village. Before leaving the house, they eat a little *rtsam pa*, butter, candy, or leftover wheat noodles. Going outside without eating invites bad luck and misfortune. A very clean wood or metal bucket with a *kha btags* 'white silk scarf' tied around the basket is used. Twigs from bushes are normally used to scour wood buckets, and a cloth is used on metal buckets. The direction in which one's family house faces is a good direction to fetch water. Being the first villager to fetch water indicates that one's family will be successful and complete their work quickly. Being the last to get water is a sign of slowness in work.

Both men and women can fetch water. If a man fetches the water, then he burns juniper on the house roof when he returns. A

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<sup>10</sup> The zodiac signs are divided into four groups: dog, horse, and tiger; pig, sheep, and rabbit; mouse, dragon, and monkey; and rooster, cow, and snake. Anyone from the group which contains that year's zodiac sign may fetch water.

woman does not burn juniper for the family, because that is proscribed, so a male family member may do it for her. If the family has no men, then she washes her hands and makes offerings, burning juniper and incense, which give off pleasing odors that exorcise evil and are also offerings to the Buddha. As juniper burns, scriptures are chanted to bring good luck. Most families make juniper offerings daily from the first to last day of Lo sar. Each household has a square platform on their house roof where this is done. Families also make offerings of different foods and liquor before the Buddha images.

## AUTHOR'S PERSONAL ACCOUNT

I went to collect water when I was seven years old. That was the year of the dragon. I was excited and curious. Mother woke me when it was still very dark outside at around five a.m. I ate some *rtsam pa* as soon as I got up.

"Mom, where is the bucket?" I asked as I washed my hands in a basin.

"In the corner of the house. Fetch us some clean water, OK?" she said from bed. The bucket was wrapped with a *kha btags* and looked nice, but I started to feel nervous.

"Once you have the water in your bucket, splash it three times towards the sky for the Buddha," she said.

"Mother, I'm afraid. What if I am the last to fetch water?" I asked.

"I'm sure you'll be the first in our village, and you will bring luck to our family," Mother encouraged.

I left home and went into the dark. I was afraid. The river was a twenty-five minute walk from my home. I did as I was told when I reached the river. Even though the river was partially frozen, I could still find gaps in the ice from which to get water. I returned home after I filled my bucket with water.

"Oh, you're so early. Are you alone?" somebody called and started toward me. I was a little scared.

"Who is it?" I asked curiously.

"It's me," she answered, and I realized that it was my cousin, Sgrol ma, who was only three years older than me.

"Is it also your turn? I'm alone," I said.

"Yeah," she answered and went to fetch water, since she did not want to be the last.

When I returned home, Mother boiled tea with the holy water I had fetched. I was proud and happy.

Boiling milk tea with new water that morning is necessary. Drinks cannot be prepared without this special *tshes chu* (water of the first day of the year). Next, the housewife cooks *ja ldan*, which, apart from milk, tea, and water, contains butter, *rtsam pa*, and salt. This tea is for special occasions. After everyone in the family gets up, the female head places a dragon-decorated bowl by the hearth for each family member and adds a large lump of fresh butter, *rtsam pa*, cheese, and sugar in each bowl. During Lo sar, only fresh butter is eaten. The rest of the year, people sell their fresh butter and eat old butter. The family sits by the fire together, drinking *ja ldan* and eating *rtsam pa*. Some finish eating very early, before daybreak, while others finish at sunrise, depending on how early they get up. Most local herders have four meals<sup>78</sup> a day: the family needs to prepare for the next meal by beginning to make *pho log*, which is made from wheat flour, *rtsam pa*, sugar, and butter. *Rtsam pa*, sugar, and much butter are mixed together into a dough ball and steamed. *Pho log* is the best food eaten during New Year. Otherwise, it is only made if a lama visits.

The entire family has another meal at nine or ten a.m. *Pho log* is cooked and eaten with yogurt. There are no special foods that are required for the third and fourth meals. Dumplings containing meat, scallions, and salt and eaten with meat soup are common. It is taboo to make visits on the first day of Lo sar to people other than very close relatives such as aunts, grandmothers, uncles and grandfathers.

#### IV. OTHER DAYS DURING LO SAR

Visits to relatives and neighbors begin on the second day. Nearby relatives are visited first, and then neighbors. The last people

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<sup>78</sup> The four meals eaten are *nang ja* (breakfast before sunrise), *dros ja* (breakfast after sunrise/ morning tea), *ging chu* (lunch), and *nub chu* (dinner).

visited are relatives who live far away. People wear their best clothes while visiting. It is shameful to visit without an invitation. Thus, each family sends one of their children to various households in the village to give extend invitations. All family members should eat something before visiting other families; it is unacceptable to visit others on an empty stomach.

Families prepare many presents for those they visit. They make fried bread and *pho log* for each family member, and take *gro ma*, *thud*, and meat. Some also take tea bricks. They drink, dance, and sing, usually spending a whole day with one family. Traditional folk songs are popular at this time. Most people return home in the very late afternoon; they do not visit more than one family per day. Before leaving, the host gives the guests the same amount or more food than the guest brought to their house. This depends on how wealthy a family is: rich families return double the gift.

Food is prepared the night before a visit to a home that is a significant distance away. Five different foods are prepared for each person in the family, e.g; bread, *pho log*, cooked meat, *gro ma*, and yoghurt. Families visit each other in turn. Often, a male family member takes food and journeys on horseback to visit distant relatives, staying for one or two days. When the time comes to depart, the relatives send many different foods to his family and promise to visit his family next year. If a daughter has married and moved into her husband's home, she is expected to return and visit her mother and other relatives; her mother's family does not need to visit her.

Most family members do not herd during Lo sar, which is a time for relaxation. A certain group of people herds for all families during Lo sar. This group drives all the villagers' yaks and horses to the mountaintop, where they cook and eat. Each family gives them good food. They spend much time dancing and singing while they are herding. Usually five people herd during Lo sar: three women and two men. Women are considered better herders than men. Each year, different people are chosen to do the herding. There are around 1,500 yaks and 200 horses to herd, and this work is very difficult. Every household prepares lots of food for the herders during this herding time, but no money or goods are paid. Other villagers spend every day dancing and singing; nobody works.



Children visit each other's homes on the fourth and thirteenth days of Lo sar, while men visit mountain deities and make offerings, either as a group or individually. Village men dress in their best clothes and have guns and prayer flags on their backs. Hundreds of bags of juniper and incense are needed for this offering, called *ri bsang*. Men fire guns while making offerings on the mountaintop and shouting, "*Lha rgyal lo, lha bsol lo, khoms pa yod dus khyod la mchod, brel ba yod dus mgon dgos*, Victory to the gods! I make this offering to you. I will make offerings to you whenever I can. Help me when I need your help!" No rules limit the number of men who participate, but women and boys under the age of seven are forbidden to attend.

## V. THE LAST DAY OF LO SAR

The last day of Lo sar is as important as the first. Local custom dictates that it is called the fifteenth of Lo sar, rather than the last day of Lo sar, though the reason for this is unclear. On this day, people bid farewell to Lo sar celebrations and start work again. The best clothes are again worn and *pho log* is made to ensure that good luck and wealth stay in the house. The entire household gathers at night and dances and sings. Young women and men dance and sing together until very late in the evening.

## VI. CHANGES IN LO SAR

Nowadays, most residents have moved to townships, county towns, and the provincial capital, Chengdu. Some families lack enough people to herd their livestock, because their children have married and moved away or are attending school. Other families believe they can find a better life elsewhere. Such relocation began around 1999. Once they move to cities and other Han dominated places, Sku nang villagers celebrate Lo sar differently. Most people born after 1945 cannot accurately describe traditional Lo sar activities.

## FIGURES



Sku nang men in their finest clothes.



Women dance in a family courtyard.



A Sku nang man at his winter house.



Men make offerings to the mountain deity as women watch.

## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

- A mdo ཨ་མདོ། \*place  
 Bde cha བདེ་ཆ། \*place  
 Bod lo བོད་ལོ། Tibetan calendar  
 'bu ras འབྲུ་རས། a kind of cloth  
 Dar mdo དར་མདོ། \*place  
 dgu thug དགུ་ཐུག། 'nine noodles'  
 Dkar mdzes དཀར་མཛེས། \*place  
 dros ja རྩོས་ཇ། lunch  
 gro ma གྲོ་མ། yam  
 gtor ma གཏོར་མ། dough effigy  
 ja ldan ཇ་ལྷན། Lo sar tea  
 kha btags ཁ་བཏགས། white silk scarf  
 khams ཁམས། \*place  
 lcu khang ལྷུ་ཁང་། yak dung room  
 mchod khang མཆོད་ཁང་། shrine  
 nang ja ནང་ཇ། breakfast  
 nub chu ལུབ་ཆུ། dinner  
 pho log ཕོ་ལོག། a special Lo sar food  
 phrug ཐུག། a kind of cloth  
 ras lwa རས་ལྷ། a kind of robe  
 rgya sgo རྒྱ་སྐོ། gate  
 rnying ma pa རྟིང་མ་པ། \*sect  
 rtsam pa རྩམ་པ། roasted barley flour  
 Sku nang སྐུ་ནང་། \*place  
 Sku nub སྐུ་ལུབ། \*place  
 snam bu སྐམ་བུ། a kind of cloth  
 thud ཐུད། wheat soup  
 tsha ru ཨ་རུ། lamb skin  
 tshes chu ཨོས་ཆུ། first water of the year  
 Zhu lu རྩུ་ལུ། \*deity

WRITE NEW VOCABULARY HERE

WRITE YOUR EVALUATION HERE

## VOCABULARY

Ask these questions to a partner.

1. Do you know any accomplished monks or lamas from your home area?
2. Do people in your hometown use barbed wire for anything?
3. Do you think that blood-letting and moxibustion are helpful? Have you ever done either?
4. During the new year festivities in your hometown, do people give cash or candies to children?
5. Where do people in your village go to circumambulate?
6. Where is the nearest medical clinic to your hometown?
7. Do people in your hometown gamble? How do they gamble?
8. What behaviors are forbidden in monasteries?
9. What lunar month is it now? What Western month is it?
10. What post-marital residence do people follow in your hometown – matrilocal, neolocal, or patrilocal?
11. What odors do you like? What odors do you dislike?
12. Where do your villagers go for pilgrimage?
13. Can you give an example of a taboo?
14. Can you sing any traditional folk songs?
15. Do you think it is important to have auspicious signs when starting a new venture?

## STRUCTURE

Some clauses beginning with '*to*' or '*in order to*' explain why or give a reason. Underline these clauses in the sentences below. The first is done for you.

1. Daughters were traditionally kept at home to do house work; few were sent to school.
2. If villagers are worried that hail and snow may come to devastate their livestock, they will ask the monks to chant in order to augment their luck and prevent disasters.
3. In the past, villagers sent their sons to monasteries to become monks if that was their son's wish.
4. Monks sometimes chant for a few days in order to cure people's illnesses.

5. No villagers know the names of the people who later became mountain deities to protect people and their environment.
6. Some elders around the age of eighty live permanently near the monastery in order to visit it often.
7. Still, many children stay at home to help parents do housework.
8. There are special chants to prevent disasters and help bring rainfall, and these are commonly chanted in the monastery.
9. Villagers invite monastery lamas to chant on such occasions as weddings or when beginning a business trip or pilgrimage.

Write clauses with 'to' or 'in order to' for the sentence below.

1. I am studying English *in order to* ...
2. Villagers visit the monastery *to* ...
3. I went to the library ...
4. We invited monks to chant ...
5. Villagers go to the grassland and dig caterpillar fungus ...
6. Before Lo sar, villagers visit the county town ...
7. Men visit the mountain ...

### EXERCISES

Do these exercises, then check your answers in the text.

*in into with until of from on inside*

\_\_\_\_\_ around 1968, villagers lived \_\_\_\_\_ one-room pitched-roofed houses made \_\_\_\_\_ adobe, stone, and poplar wood. Older family males designed the houses and built them \_\_\_\_\_ other male relatives and, occasionally, females. Villagers collected stones \_\_\_\_\_ local mountain slopes and certain skilled village men made them \_\_\_\_\_ square tiles that were then put \_\_\_\_\_ the roof. There were no separate rooms \_\_\_\_\_ most houses; families had a shrine, stove, table, and wood storage boxes \_\_\_\_\_ the one room.



During twenty days of pre-Lo sar activity, township and county towns are (visit/visited) to (purchase/purchased) liquor, tea bricks, candy, meat, and new clothing. Food is very important during Lo sar. People say "*Lo sar ni za dang dga ba'i dus*, Lo sar is a time to (ate/eat) and (enjoyed/enjoy)." Village men (go/went) to nearby monasteries to (make/ made) prayer flags on the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth lunar month, (spent/spend) two days there to (finishes/finish) the printing, and later (offers/offer) these flags to local mountain deities. Monasteries have carved wood blocks that families (borrow/borrows) during Lo sar to (printed/print) scriptures on cloth. Men also (go/went) to forests for one or two days to (cut/cuts) juniper for all the villagers. There are small forests near the summer pastures, but often men (go/goes) to Lhasa Township where there are large forests with more juniper. These men (ride/rides) horses and (took/take) six to nine yaks with them to (hailed/haul) the juniper back.

*Can you guess the missing verbs?*

Villagers \_\_\_\_\_ in their best attire on this day; nobody is allowed to \_\_\_\_\_ their normal old clothes. After getting up, a fire must be \_\_\_\_\_. The night before, people \_\_\_\_\_ very dry grass and bushes to \_\_\_\_\_ fire to the next morning. The fire should \_\_\_\_\_ with three puffs at most. If the fire ignites with one puff, it means the family will \_\_\_\_\_ very lucky that year; all their work will be completed successfully, and no death or misfortune will \_\_\_\_\_ them. If the fire ignites on the second puff, the family will \_\_\_\_\_ well in their endeavors. If the fire ignites on the third puff, nothing especially bad or good will occur. If the fire does not ignite by the third puff, it is believed many bad things will \_\_\_\_\_ to the family, such as illness, death, and other misfortunes.

*third special such smaller upper important another flat other*

There are four \_\_\_\_\_ mountains near Sku nang that locals believe were once people with \_\_\_\_\_ abilities. No villagers know the names of the people who later became mountain deities to protect people and their environment. Three \_\_\_\_\_ mountains are located together. It is believed they are a family.

Between Shar stod bzhag bkra dkar po (a male), and Bzhag mo (a female) is a third \_\_\_\_\_ mountain, which is considered to be the son of the other two mountains, who are a couple. This \_\_\_\_\_ mountain has no name \_\_\_\_\_ than Zhu lu (the son). \_\_\_\_\_ mountain, 'Pos gangs dkar, is one kilometer from the other three. Before Bzhag mo married Shar stod bzhag bkra dkar po, she loved 'Pos gangs dkar. Bzhag mo was planning to marry 'Pos gangs dkar, but Shar stod bzhag bkra dkar po objected and shot an arrow at her, cutting off the \_\_\_\_\_ part of her body. Today, the top of Bzhag mo Mountain is \_\_\_\_\_.

## CONTENT

1. How did Sku nang get its name?
2. When do local people invite monks and lamas to chant?
3. Tell me about the important local mountains.
4. Compare local tents and houses.
5. Why do local elders die without passing on traditional knowledge to younger generations?
6. What do people trade for Lo sar necessities if they lack cash?
7. What do people do with the refuse after they finish cleaning? Is this done in your hometown?
8. What different things are put in *dgu thug*? What do these signify?
9. Which is the most important day of Lo sar? Why?
10. Tell me about fetching water.
11. How is herding organized during Lo sar?
12. What do men do when they visit the mountain deity on the thirteenth day?
13. What happens on the last day of Lo sar in Sku nang?
14. What changes are happening to new year festivities?
15. Look at the figures and discuss them.

AN A MDO TIBETAN NOMAD NEW YEAR: FOOD,  
CLOTHES, AND VISITING  
Skal bzang tshe brtan

PART ONE: LIFE IN NOR MGO VILLAGE

I. NOR MGO VILLAGE LOCATION, POPULATION, AND  
TERRITORY

Nor mgo village is a Tibetan herding village located in Stob ldan Township, Rtse khog County, Rma lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon Province, PR China. Rma lho is situated south-east of Xining City, the provincial capital of Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, and east of Mtsho lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. According to the government's 2007 statistics, the population of Rma lho is 225,773, of which Tibetans constitute 65.32% and Han Chinese 8.4%. Other residents include Mongols (14%) Monguor (officially classified as Tu, but locally known as Hor or Dor rdo, 4.5%), Hui Muslim (7.3%), Bao'an (0.12%), and Salar (0.6%) (*Huang nan zang zu zi zhi zhou tong ji ju*, 2008).

Rtse khog County is in central Rma lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, ninety-seven kilometers south of Rong bo, the prefecture capital. It has eight townships and a population of 57,000, of which Tibetans constitute the majority. Stob ldan township, in which Nor mgo village is situated, has approximately 24,300 people. Most Stob ldan Tibetans are herders.

Nor mgo Village is fifteen kilometers from the township and borders Yag bza' Village in the north and Ga rong Village in the south. To the east, there is about 2,000 *mu*<sup>79</sup> of grazing land which previously belonged to Nor mgo but which has since been given by the government to Kha sog Village.

Previously, Nor mgo villagers shared the grassland. However, in 1991, the winter pasture was divided. Winter grazing land is the best quality pasture in Nor mgo Village and people spend most of their time there. The village also has another territory, part of the summer pasture, which is still used collectively by the whole village.

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<sup>79</sup> A *mu* is a unit for measuring areas of land. One *mu* = 0.067 hectares.

## II. VILLAGE HISTORY

Nor mgo Village is one of a group of nine villages that make up the Dme shul Clan. The nine villages are: Do ze,<sup>80</sup> Dpon skor 'Leader's Village', Nor mgo 'Yak Head Village', Khe res 'Separation Village', Dom lung 'Bear Valley Village', Sngags pa 'Tantric Village', Sgar ba 'Camping Village', Mgo sbra 'Tent Village', and Yag bza' 'Beautiful Princess Village'.

People believe that the ancestors of the Dme shul Clan came from Sa skya, in contemporary Gzhis ga rtse County, Gzhis ga rtse Prefecture, Tibetan Autonomous Region. Their clan was called Kon. In the thirteenth century, a man called Lha rte brag sna pa (1235-1280 CE), was sent by the Sa skya leader, 'Gro mgon chos rgyal 'phags ba, to the area of Reb gong County. He and subsequent generations of his family settled there. Some time in the fourteenth century, Kon clan member, 'Jam dbyangs khro rgyal, killed someone from his village. After the murder, he fled to live in the southern part of Reb gong. The area he fled to is where the Dme shul Clan now lives. There are still many people from the Kon clan living in Reb gong. Since 'Jam dbyangs khro rgyal killed someone in his own village, people started to call him *dme po* 'murderer'. As a result, his descendants are now called Dme po tshang 'Murderer Family' and the clan is called the Dme shul Clan.

Nor mgo Village is one part of the Dme shul Clan. Nor mgo villagers have different theories about how the village got its name. Some people say that, a long time ago, there was a hero named 'Jigs byed in the Dme shu Clan who had a big head covered in long hair, making him look like a yak. At that time, Nor mgo villagers were professional bandits; 'Jigs byed nor mgo, 'Yak-headed 'Jigs byed', was a successful bandit who stole for villagers and protected them from pursuers. Some people believe that Nor mgo villagers are the descendants of that 'yak-headed' man.

Another explanation of the village name is as follows. In Tibetan culture, singing *la gzhas* 'love songs' with family members or in the presence of elders is taboo. People never sing love songs at parties where old people or relatives of the opposite sex are present; if such people are present, singers must wait for them to leave. In the Reb gong area, especially in agriculture communities, this prohibition is rigorously enforced. Young people sing love

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<sup>80</sup> This name has no meaning.

songs to each other only on remote mountain slopes or on the grassland. Sometimes young boys and girls gather together in a house or tent during the night and sing love songs to each other after their parents and elders have gone to sleep. However, in Nor mgo Village, these proscriptions do not apply. People may sing love songs anytime with any family members, including relatives of the opposite sex and elders. For that reason, other villagers always chide Nor mgo villagers, saying things such as, "*Nor mgo sha ra nor gi sha/ khrig khrig med na g.yag gi sha*, These people are as shameless as human bodies with the heads of yaks. They are not humans, just animals." Other villages look down upon this village, and use 'yak-head' as an insult.

### III. LOCAL RELIGION

Most Nor mgo villagers follow both Rnying ma pa and Dge lugs pa sects of Tibetan Buddhism. Male Rnying ma pa tantrins, called *sngags pa*, wear a braid called *sngags ral* wrapped about the head with a red cloth. Lay believers do not wear *sngags ral*. Families commonly set aside half a room as a shrine, and juniper branches and highland barley flour are burnt daily as offerings to such mountain gods and protector deities as Dpal ldan lha mo, Mgon po tshong bdags, Gnyan ri, and Rdza mer.

Villagers hold numerous religious activities during the year. The most important one is called Bzhi ba'i smyung gnas (fast of the fourth lunar month), held over nine days from the eighth until the sixteenth of the fourth lunar month. Local *sngangs pa* stay together in a tent nearby the village and chant for the villagers' well-being.

The village is divided into three *gnyer skor* 'groups', numbered one, two, and three, each of which takes turn to manage *sngags pa* chanting rituals. During such rituals, village *sngags pa* gather in the middle of the village at the village *ma Ni* stone pile and chant such texts as Zhi khro, Lha mo'i bskang ba, Gcod, and Gnyan ri'i bsang mchod, for such deities as Ma cig lab sgron, Ma ha ka la, Rta mgrin, Yul lha gnyan ri, and Rdza mer. This is done in order to protect villagers from illness, disaster, and bad luck.

People ask lamas or fortune tellers (*mo pa* and *lha pa*) about their life and future during or several days after Lo sar. Villagers present gifts (described later) and ask the lama to do a

divination called *bzhin mo* about the fate of their family and livestock in the coming year. Usually, lamas tell them to chant such scriptures as, Bskal bzang, 'Phags pa, Gzung bsdus, Gser 'od, Ting 'dzin, Bka' thang, Mdo, Gdugs dkar, Sgrol ma, and ma Ni. After the Lama has done the divination and given instructions about what the family should chant, villagers return home and invite monks or village *sngags pa* to their family to chant the prescribed scriptures; the family pays around 30 RMB each day. Each family needs to chant for several days, depending on how many scriptures must be chanted. Neighbors and other villagers are also invited to participate; there are no mandatory payments for the villagers because it is considered to be just 'helping' that family. Nonetheless, the family gives candy to the chanters or people reciprocate by chanting for other families when needed.

In the past some families asked the village *lha pa*, 'trance medium', for predictions about their future, though most visited lamas for predictions during Lo sar. However, the village *lha pa* passed away in 2003 and in 2008, no one had replaced him.

There are very few religious structures in or nearby Nor mgo Village. There are no monasteries, stupas, or temples. However, the village has a *lab tse*<sup>81</sup> and a pile of *ma Ni* stones. Most religious activities are held in front of *ma Ni* stones.

The most common religious practitioners are *sngags pa*. Additionally, two monks from the village now live in Rong bo Monastery in Reb gong (Tong ren) County.

#### IV. LOCAL LANGUAGE

All Nor mgo villagers are A mdo<sup>82</sup> Tibetan speakers and many locals believe that Rtse khog herders speak a prestigious standard of A mdo Tibetan Dialect; they pronounce prefixes and suffixes more clearly than A mdo speakers from agricultural communities.

Stob ldan Township is one hour by horse from the village.

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<sup>81</sup> Usually found on mountain tops, the *lab tse* is a home for the local mountain deity.

<sup>82</sup> Tibetan areas can be broadly divided into three cultural and linguistic regions: Dbus gtsang (central Tibet, the Tibet Autonomous Region), Khams (eastern and southeastern Tibetan areas), and A mdo (northeastern Tibetan areas).

A few Han and Hui people butcher sheep, sell meat, or operate restaurants and shops there. These people generally use A mdo Tibetan to communicate with villagers. From April to July, Han and Hui people from Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region and Xunhua County (Haidong Region, Mtsho sngon Province) and other places in inner China, come to the township to buy caterpillar fungus.<sup>83</sup> They speak Chinese when they do business. Most of them speak standard Chinese and some of them speak their local Chinese dialect; most Nor mgo villagers do not understand either.

Nowadays, many villagers send their children to school and their families have moved to the township to operate shops instead of herding livestock. They have bought TVs and DVD players and watch Chinese movies and news on TV almost every day. More and more Han and Hui have come to the township in recent years and local Tibetans are rapidly Sinicizing. For example, Nor mgo village children increasingly speak Tibetan mixed with such Chinese words as *dian shi* 'TV', *shou yin ji* 'radio', *hao ma* 'number', and *mo tuo* 'motorcycle'. Herdsmen commonly tell their cell phone numbers in Chinese. As an example, the following dialogue reproduces the speech of two men from Nor mgo Village making purchases in Stob ldan Township.

- A: ཨ་རྒྱུ་ཁྱེ་གཟིག་ག་ཡོང་ནུས།  
 B: ང་མཚུ་གཟིག་ར་ཁྲོ་གཟིག་ཉོ་གི་ཡོང་ནུས།  
 A: མཚུ་ཁྱོད་ནས་ཡོང་ནས་ནང་།  
 B: ཨོ་ལེ། ཁྱོད་ཐར་རྒྱ་ཨོ་ཡོ་གི།  
 A: མ་ཤེས་ཡ། ཁྱོས་ཐུག་ཐོབ་ར།  
 B: ཨ་ཡི། ཁྱིམ་གི་མཚུ་མཚུ་མཚུ་ཨོ་ཤེས།  
 A: 一三六三八二八རེད།

## V. EDUCATION

Until 2002, Nor mgo Village had a tent primary school

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<sup>83</sup> Caterpillar fungus is a medicinal substance; in the winter it is an insect and in the summer it becomes a herb renowned for its medicinal properties. Selling caterpillar fungus is currently the main source of cash income for Nor mgo villagers.

(established in 1999) with grades one to three. Then, in 2002, a school building was built by the County Ministry of Education, and grades one to four are now taught. Today, more than eighty children attend Nor mgo Village Primary School. Most families have at least one child attending school today. Only one official worker has received a job after graduating from middle school in the county town in 1985. In 2007, there was one university student and two high school graduates from the village. There were five high school students, twenty middle school students, and eighty-six primary school students in the village in 2008.

## VI. PASTURES

Nor mgo villagers have a maximum of seventy-five *mu* of grazing land per person in their winter pasture and thirty *mu* in their summer pasture. In 1991, the village had much more grazing land, and villagers owned many yaks and sheep. The east side of the village was connected with Kha sog Village in Reb gong County. For many years Nor mgo villagers were embroiled in feuds with this village over the use of grazing land. Local lamas and county government officials settled the conflict between the two villages. Nor mgo Village lost 4,000 *mu* of land in the settlement.

## VII. NOR MGO VILLAGE FAMILIES

Traditionally, families wished to have many children as a measure of their quality. A local saying describes a prosperous family thus, "*Go kha bu yi sgang, rgo kha rgyu yi sgang*, Inside the room is filled with children and outside of the room is filled with livestock." Before the Family Planning Policy was implemented in 1982, families in Nor mgo Village consisted of grandparents, parents, and an average of six children. However, as of 2007 family size was much smaller. Families in Nor mgo Village now commonly consist of seven people: grandparents, parents, and three children. The new policy stipulates that if the family has only two children, (government workers' families should have only two children but others can have three children) the government will reward them with 3,000 RMB. This incentive makes villagers



willing to control birth.

The oldest child in the family, male or female, is expected to stay at home and be irresponsible for taking care of the parents. The oldest child marries between the ages of sixteen and eighteen. If the female child is the oldest child, she may stay at home and take care of her parents after getting married. Accordingly, her husband will resettle matrilocally. However, female children, if not students, usually reside patrilocally. Marriage is usually arranged by the groom's parents. Separate houses are built for other male children after they marry as a neolocal residence, and a share of furniture and livestock is given to them by the family.

## VIII. HOUSING

Every family in Nor mgo Village lives in a one-story, flat-roofed house made of adobe bricks, red bricks, and wood for roof beams. The houses are usually one hundred meters square and three meters high and do not have courtyards.

Prior to 1991, Nor mgo villagers lived year-round in black yak-hair tents. The tent cover was supported by a ridged pole and internal poles as well as rope, supported by outer poles about two meters high. The tent cover hung from tension ropes fixed at the first fold of the cover and was supported by outer poles and pegged to the ground with wooden pins, about six meters away from the tent. Tents were constantly repaired and passed through the family for numerous generations.

Families could move anywhere they wanted inside the village territory in the past, but in 1991 the government restricted movement by fencing the pastures. Since then, villagers moved from tents to houses. Housing materials were provided by the government, who also built the houses. Families needed to pay back the cost of the house after five years, with additional interest.

The kitchen and living space are in one room, in the middle of which is an adobe stove, containing two holes for pots, each approximately one meter in diameter. The chimney goes up from the stove directly through a hole in the middle of the roof. Yak dung is used as fuel. During the summer, villagers move to the summer pasture in a small cloth tent (black yak hair tents were still in use in the last years of the twentieth century but now only a few villagers use them) and spend two or three months there. When

they came back to the winter pasture, they live in the house again.

## IX. CLOTHING

Nor mgo villagers wear fake animal skin Tibetan robes and high leather boots in daily life. All females normally wear Tibetan robes whereas men occasionally wear such modern clothing as Western suits. People wear different clothes according to the seasons. In the summer they wear a thick robe called *ras lwa* 'thick cloth' and in winter they wear *slog pa* 'sheep skin robes' which keep them warm in the harsh weather. On special occasions, such as Lo sar and weddings, they wear dark-red robes called *phrug* 'felt' and *tsha ru* 'lamb skin robe' with fake otter skin stitched on the bottom edge and fake leopard skin stitched on the upper edge of the robe. Villagers also wear *wa zhwa* 'fox fur hats'.

Nowadays, young Tibetan people do not often wear Tibetan robes; they wear new-style Tibetan jackets, made from Chinese cloth depicting Tibetan symbols, and western clothes. Those new style clothes are usually made in Xining; locals do not know how to make them.

## X. CULTURAL CHANGE

Nor mgo Village is a remote rural Tibetan herding village and cannot easily be accessed by car. There was no road for cars and trucks in Nor mgo Village until 1991, when the local government built houses in the village. Chinese workers built the houses for the village, bringing materials by truck which necessitated a simple road. After the road was built most villagers began transporting materials in trucks and cars, but before this they transported materials by a type of yak called *sna ma*, 'transportation yak', and horse. Each family had more than ten yaks for transport. Nor mgo villagers still use a few yaks for transport when moving to the summer pasture, but today transport food by car and truck.

People started using motorcycles in Nor mgo Village in 1996 but they did not become common until 1998, because most people could not afford them. In 2008, all families used motorcycles for transportation and purchasing things from the township. Many

people still have horses but only use them for horse races and such festivals as *lab tse* (renewing the mountain deity's altar) and *chibs bsu* (receiving Lamas).

Currently, there is no grid electricity in Nor mgo Village. In the past the villagers used gas and candles for light, but around 1997, two or three families started using solar panels. Most villagers did not begin using solar panels until the early years of the twenty-first century. In the summer of 2008, the village began petitioning the local government to connect electricity.

Radios and tape players became widespread in Nor mgo Village in the early nineties. People listened to Tibetan music, news, weather forecast, and King Ge sar stories on Mtsho sngon Tibetan Radio Station. Young people used tape players to learn love songs and folk songs. Usually, people listened to the radio at night, especially during dinner. Young people listened to the radio while herding. Occasionally, many neighbors gathered around one tape player to listen to King Ge sar and other Tibetan stories, such as the Eight Tibetan Plays.

People still sing folk songs and love songs in the village at parties but, in the last few years, villagers with solar panels have power for TV, with which villagers can access multiple TV channels and watch movies in Modern Standard Chinese. More and more children have become interested in televised cartoons and are not interested in listening to folktales from their grandparents. Folktales, traditional songs, and love songs are now endangered.

## PART TWO: LO SAR

### I. BREAD PREPARATION

*Go re dmar po*, 'red bread', also called *Lo sar go re*, 'New Year bread', is important in herding areas. Tibetan people call it red bread even though it is actually dark yellow. Nor mgo villagers make it on the twenty-fourth to the twenty-seventh days of the lunar month before Lo sar. It is hard work and requires help from people outside of the family. Neighboring families take turns making red bread. During the making of red bread, village women and girls are the main workers; they make the dough while a man

fries it and adds yak dung to the fire in the stove.

During Lo sar, each family makes almost two hundred breads (using around fifty kilograms of wheat flour), which are used as decorations during Lo sar and eaten afterwards. The breads are made from square sheets of dough which have a slit in the center. One edge is pulled through the slit. When this shape is thrown into the oil, it turns up at the corners. Villagers also make extra red bread which they eat that day and give to helpers. The amount of red bread a family produces depends on their financial condition. For example, a rich family is likely to use fifty to eighty kilograms of wheat flour while a poor family uses forty to fifty kilograms of wheat flour. Most Nor mgo villagers are neither rich nor poor, and therefore around fifty kilograms of wheat flour for each family is the norm.

The night before bread is made, the matriarch of the family makes leavened dough and puts it in wooden buckets. The next morning, female helpers come to the home and start work. They cut the dough into small pieces, flatten them with rolling pins, cut them into squares, and give them to the fryer. He tosses them into the boiling oil one by one. The bread-fryer (usually the most skillful man in the neighborhood, or sometimes a man from another neighborhood) uses a wooden fork to stir the bread in the oil until it is cooked.

Traditionally, villagers first make a *rus sbal*, 'turtle,' from the wheat flour, cook it, and put it up somewhere it can see the pot. The turtle symbolizes the *klu*, 'naga', or 'water deity' and helps to make the bread more colorful. After Lo sar, the *rus sbal* is burned as an offering, or may be eaten. Villagers care deeply about the color of Lo sar bread, believing that the color is an omen indicating what will happen to the family in the New Year. If the color of the bread is dark yellow, it is a good sign and the family will be lucky in the New Year; family members will be healthy and successful. If the color is light yellow, it is not a good sign and the mistress of the family will burn juniper leaves in front of the stove to purify it; she will not say anything while doing this. It also depends on the bread-fryer; he should be clean before he does the work, meaning that he must abstain from sex on the eve of day and should wear clean clothes while frying.

Villagers also make a small red bread called *sdus rig*, 'pieces-bread'. The method of making *sdus rig* is similar to red

bread, but the dough is chopped into pieces the size of a person's thumb before being fried. This is done at the same time, in the same pot, and by the same workers who made the red bread. *Sdus rig* is not used for decoration; it is made to be eaten, especially by herdsmen during Lo sar. The herdsmen can eat it without tea while they herd yaks and sheep. During Lo sar, elders herd; they give youths and children the chance to go visiting. After making the red bread and *sdus rig*, villagers make four animals – a yak, a horse, a sheep, and a goat – with wheat flour. Collectively they are called *g.yang ra sgo bzhi*, 'four symbolic animals'. These are cooked in hot oil at the end of the work and put in the shrine as Lo sar decorations. After Lo sar, these animals are burnt as offering in *bsang*.<sup>84</sup>

## II. ZHUN 'TIBETAN CAKE'

*Zhun* is an important gift during Lo sar. Village women make it a few days before Lo sar. There is no exact date for making *zhun*, it depends on the labor schedule (people do it whenever they have free time in the ten days before Lo sar). Usually, *zhun* are made from the twenty-first to twenty-seventh of the twelfth lunar month. Preparing it is one of the most difficult jobs when preparing for Lo sar. There are three different kinds of *zhun*. One is *za zhun* 'eating cake' and is usually bigger than other *zhun*. It is made from butter, cheese, sugar, and roasted yam flour mixed together and put into a pot or basin. Candies and fruit are then put on the surface of the cake as a decoration. The next morning the cake is taken out of the pot or basin. This cake is eaten after Lo sar. The same materials are also used to make smaller cakes called *lab zhun* 'basin cakes' in middle-sized basins (thirty centimeters in diameter). These are given to local lamas and respected elder relatives during Lo sar. The other kind of smaller *zhun*, called *dkar zhun* 'bowl cake', is made in bowls with mutton and beef fat, cheese, and roasted flour. These cakes are given to ordinary people as gifts during Lo sar. Making *zhun* is traditionally women's work and takes two or three

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<sup>84</sup> *Bsang* is an offering burned to feed deities. It includes roasted barley (burned roasted barley is said to represent yaks, while other barley flour represents sheep), juniper needles, water, and any other foods except meat.

days.

Recently, Lo sar gifts have changed due to changes in the local economy. Villagers no longer make *zhun* as commonly as before and instead give bricks of black tea and bottles of alcohol which they buy in town. One bottle of alcohol costs six to ten RMB and a brick of black tea costs five to nine RMB.

### III. LO SAR EVE

The day before Lo sar is very busy; it is a time to clean and prepare for the approaching New Year. In the morning, both women and men clean the house. Elders and children do not get out of bed because they cannot help with the work. When the workers get up, they cover all the furniture, as well as the elders and children, with a big sheet of plastic or cloth. Then, they cover their eyes with a cloth or put on sunglasses to protect their eyes from dirt and dust. They then use a big broom to sweep the ceiling of the house. The ceiling can be completed quickly if there are many workers. When finished, all the garbage is put in a bucket and is called *dgu do*, '(twenty)-ninth smoke', which represents the collective evil and ill-will of the past year.

Next, all family members wash their hair one after another. A member of the family who is familiar with cutting hair cuts the hair of the men and children, and then puts all the cut hair, along with the dirty water used to wash their faces, with the *dgu do*. Just before sunset, a woman (though sometimes a man) carries the *dgu do* to a place where it is discarded, while children set off firecrackers, chasing away bad luck. The direction in which to discard *dgu do* is based on zodiac signs, and is told by a *sngags pa* or someone who knows these directions.

The most important work on Lo sar Eve is making *dgu khon* 'twenty-ninth dumplings'. All the families in the village make steamed stuffed dumplings on the afternoon of Lo sar Eve. Women make the dumplings. It is difficult work and takes a long time; one woman may take half a day to do it. Wealthy families use only mutton and beef to make the dumplings while poor families use vegetables with a little meat. Most of the dumplings are eaten during Lo sar Eve dinner and the rest are kept to be eaten during Lo sar.

Family members start making food and house decorations

after the Lo sar Eve dinner is over. There are two kinds of decorations: *mchod rgyan* 'shrine decorations' and *sder kha* 'food decorations'. First, elders make *mchod rgyan*. The *mchod rgyan* includes *thang ka* and other Buddhist images, as well as incense and such foods as candy, bread, and fruit stacked neatly in seven copper bowls. These bowls are called *theb tse* and are normally used for offering water in the shrine.

To make *sder kha*, food is put on large metal or plastic platters (in the past these were wooden) on a cloth-covered table made of yak dung. The table is one meter high and three meters long. Wealthy families' main *sder kha* is meat: one large platter of mutton and another of beef. Poorer families have dumplings and bread, but the poorest families have only a little bread and a few vegetable dumplings. On two other platters, dumplings and red bread are arranged in the same way. Traditionally there is one big *za zhun* in the *sder kha*. Candies, sunflower seeds, fruit, and *sdu rig* are placed on small plates. Bottles of liquor and beer are also displayed.

If an immediate family member or any close relative has passed away that year, the family does not celebrate Lo sar and only the *mchod rgyan* are prepared.

After all the food is placed on the tables, most family members, especially elders, sleep, while young people stay awake, preparing Lo sar gifts for other families and singing, drinking, and playing games at home.

At midnight, everyone begins to celebrate Lo sar. Prior to midnight young people put on their new clothes, while elders and people who previously slept wake up and get out of bed. After midnight, families receive visitors. Families who are not up before visitors come receive a bad reputation; people say they are lazy.

On the first day of Lo sar at around twelve-thirty, families start visiting each other. The families who have suffered a recent loss of a family member do not visit other families but one member of each of the other families in the village visits them with Lo sar gifts.

#### IV. THE FIRST DAY OF LO SAR

At twelve o'clock in the morning on the first day of Lo sar,

firecrackers are set off by every family. Everyone wears new clothes. Girls wear necklaces and earrings and boys wear a large knife. The head of every family makes *bsang* on a *bsang khri*, a square-shaped altar made of yak dung covered in earth about one and half meters high. This was made behind the house about fifteen days before Lo sar. Usually, families make a *bsang khri* higher than the regular one (one and a half meters rather than one meter). However, if someone in the village has died in the past year, villagers will lower their *bsang khri* based on how close they were to that person, as well as their proximity to the home of the deceased. If an immediate family member passes away, no *bsang khri* is built. If no-one in the village has passed away during the past year, as happened in 1995, villagers all build unusually high *bsang khri* (up to two meters high) and decorate them by painting such images as the Eight Auspicious Symbols on the sides.

All the men in the family gather around the *bsang khri* to burn juniper branches while offering barley liquor, bread, candies, and fruits as sacrifices to the *sa bdag* 'land deities' and *gzhi bdag* 'protector deities'. The female head of each family goes to a stream or well for *lo chu* 'New Year water'. In the past a *zo ba* 'wooden bucket' about one meter high was used, but now women use plastic buckets. A little butter is put on the rims of the containers as a decoration which indicates that the New Year's water was collected in that bucket. As soon as a woman arrives at the stream, she takes a ladleful of water and sprays it skyward three times as offerings to protector deities and mountain gods. Usually the water source is under twenty minutes walk away.

After returning home from outside, butter lamps are lit and elders chant scriptures while young people prostrate in front of the *mchod khang* three times. Then, the mistress of the family uses the *lo chu* to make milk tea. Before offering breakfast, she puts a little milk tea in a ladle, takes it outside the house, and sprays it skyward three times. The first offering of milk tea is to the *dkon mchog gsum* (The Three Jewels: the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha). The second offering of milk tea is to the two protectors or dharmapalas, Dpal ldan lha mo and Ma ha ka la. The third offering of milk tea is to the local mountain gods: Gnyan ri and Rdza mer. While making the offering, the woman calls the deities' names.

Every family member has a bowl of *rtsam pa*<sup>85</sup> and milk

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<sup>85</sup> *Rtsam pa* is roasted barley flour. It is the staple food of Nor mgo



tea for New Year's breakfast, while the mistress of the family gives basins of soup with meat and mixed food, such as *zhun*, red bread, and *rstam pa* to the family dogs as Lo sar gifts. Dogs protect the family by stopping thieves and wolves and are therefore rewarded during Lo sar.

When breakfast is finished, people start visiting other families. When arriving at other families' homes, they say "Lo sar *bzang* Happy New Year," to each other. Sometimes they say "*Bkra shis bde legs*,"<sup>86</sup> when meeting each other on New Year's morning. After exchanging greetings with each other, they give Lo sar gifts to the oldest people in the family. They feast on the food and drink that has been painstakingly prepared and drink and sing. When leaving, the matriarch of the host family gives a *zhun* as a Lo sar gift and sends the visitors off. Children go to visit first and then other members go. Usually, neighbors are visited first. Children only stay three or five minutes in each home but elder people stay longer.

As mentioned before, villagers recently stopped making *zhun* gifts and instead, take tea bricks and a bottle of liquor with a *kha btags*<sup>87</sup> as Lo sar gifts. Wealthy families give good quality bottles of liquor and tea bricks while the poor families give cheaper bottles and tea breaks. Nobody comments on whether the Lo sar gifts are good or bad quality.

Children visit families without any Lo sar gifts. They sit with a family for a few minutes and, when they leave, the female head of the family in the past gave small *zhun*, but now gives a small plastic bag of candies, while some families even give money (usually one to five RMB for each child) and small firecrackers. The children hurry away to the next home after they receive the

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Tibetans. When mixed with cheese, tea, and butter, it is also called *rtsam pa*. Most local Tibetans eat this for breakfast and bring *rtsam pa* with them when they go to work, herd, or travel.

<sup>86</sup> These auspicious words are thought to have been the first to come out of the Buddha's mouth after he first taught the Dharma, and indicated the success of his teachings in providing a clear method for obtaining liberation.

<sup>87</sup> *Kha btags* are silk scarves used to show respect for gods, important persons, and guests. The color and length vary according to the situation, but the most common *kha btags* given are white.

gifts. Children, in groups of four to five, visit as many families as they can (between thirty and fifty families) and do not return home until they are exhausted. If they are unable to finish visiting all families on the first day of Lo sar, children go visiting on the second and third days. When they return home, children give all the gifts they received to their parents and then gossip about which family's *mchod rgyan* and *sder kha* are the best.

In the afternoon, at around five or six, everyone returns home and rests. Villagers don't work much in the afternoon. As the sun sets, the men in the family make *bsang* again. Everyone must be back at home on Lo sar evening; people think that a family should be together on the evening of the first day of the year to enjoy dinner together. After dinner, all the family members rest and then go to bed earlier than usual, at around nine o'clock.

## V. THE SECOND DAY OF LO SAR

The second day of Lo sar is also a very busy day. A man from each family brings their best gifts to their local lama, who may live in such places as Rong bo Town or Rtse khog County Town. Representatives take special gifts: several bricks of tea and their best *zhun* with a yellow cloth three meters long and one meter wide called *mjal dar*, and also bring a *kha btags*. They prostrate three times in front of their lama, tie the *kha btags* around the *zhun* and put them on the brick tea, while the *mjal dar* is draped over the gifts when they are handed to the lama.

Usually elder people and women go to visit neighbors on this day. They spend more than one hour with each family, enjoying eating delicious food and drinking milk tea. They do not take Lo sar gifts with them, but the host family give such Lo sar gifts as *zhun*, tea, or liquor to them when they leave.

Herders (both male and female) take much food, brick tea, milk, and such cooking utensils as teapots, cooking pots, and bowls to the pastures. They cook and eat together, and sing traditional songs. It is not necessary that all families send people to herd but usually one person from each family goes. Neighbors or close friends typically herd and cook together.

## VI. THE THIRD AND FIFTH DAYS OF LO SAR

The third and fifth days of Lo sar are considered to be party days.

The *gnyen ston* 'wedding party', *khang ston* 'house warming party', *brgyad ston* 'eighty year olds' party', and *no'u ston* 'three year olds' party' are held on these two special days. *Gnyen ston* is very important; couples who are not married through the *gnyen ston* are not considered a 'real' couple even if they have a government marriage certificate.

*Brgyad ston* is very rare, because few local people live to the age of eighty. This party is held to show respect for elders and to express happiness at their longevity. It is a great honor for a family to hold a *brgyad ston*.

Families holding any sort of party invite the whole village before Lo sar. Sometimes there are many parties held in the village on the same day, so one family member will be sent to each party, or gifts are sent with other guests. If a close relative is holding a party then the whole family goes. Different parties require different gifts. For the *gnyen ston*, guests usually bring a bottle of liquor with a long sash (five meters long and one meter wide). For the *khang ston* party, some bottles of liquor and beer are brought. When attending the *brgyad ston*, guests bring a white Tibetan shirt with a *kha btags*, sash, and *zhun* as gifts to the elder. When people give gifts to elders they usually say, "These gifts are the prize for your eightieth year." The celebrated elder gives some candies or fruit back to the person while saying, "I give my age to you and you will live to be as old as me." During the *no'u ston* parties, guests bring a new child's shirt and a small dragon-decorated bowl filled with candies as a gift for the child.

During any party, people tell jokes and take turns to sing *dmang glu* 'Tibetan traditional songs'. People also sing *glu shags* 'competitive, improvised antiphonal songs'. *Glu shags* are considered the most interesting songs and bring the parties to life. Following is an example:

### Song 1

<sup>1</sup> Nga seng lo'u dkar mo med sa na

<sup>2</sup> Khyod tsi gu zhig gi stong go gi

<sup>3</sup> Nga seng lo'u dkar mo thon dang na

<sup>4</sup> Khyod gan rug an na mi bda' na

<sup>5</sup> Sgam 'oga gan nas mi gsod na

<sup>6</sup> Nga glu ba zhi li med sa na

<sup>7</sup> Khyod glu med zhi lis stong go gi  
<sup>8</sup> Nga glu ba zhi li thon dang na  
<sup>9</sup> Khyod gan rug an na mi 'ded na  
<sup>10</sup> Gya bar gan nas mi rdzogs na

<sup>1</sup> ང་མེད་ལུ་དཀར་མོ་མེད་ས་ན།  
<sup>2</sup> རྩོད་ཙེ་གུ་ཞིག་གི་སྟངས་གོ།  
<sup>3</sup> ང་མེད་ལུ་དཀར་མོ་ཐོན་དང་ན།  
<sup>4</sup> རྩོད་གན་རུ་གན་ན་མི་བདའ་ན།  
<sup>5</sup> སྐམ་འོག་གན་ནས་མི་གསོད་ན།  
<sup>6</sup> ང་སྐུ་བ་ཞི་ལེ་མེད་ས་ན།  
<sup>7</sup> རྩོད་སྐུ་མེད་ཞི་ལེས་སྟངས་གོ།  
<sup>8</sup> ང་སྐུ་བ་ཞི་ལེ་ཐོན་དང་ན།  
<sup>9</sup> རྩོད་གན་རུ་གན་ན་མི་འདེད་ན།  
<sup>10</sup> གུ་བར་གན་ནས་མི་རྫོགས་ན།

<sup>1</sup> When the cat is away,  
<sup>2</sup> The mice will play.  
<sup>3</sup> Ah! I'm the great cat here right now,  
<sup>4</sup> I will chase you around the room,  
<sup>5</sup> And kill you under the box over there.  
<sup>6</sup> When the great singer is away,  
<sup>7</sup> The simple singer will sing,  
<sup>8</sup> Ah! I'm the great singer here right now,  
<sup>9</sup> I will sing endless songs to you,  
<sup>10</sup> And make your face turn red.

<sup>1</sup> Nga'i glu mgo dgung sngon gnam na yod  
<sup>2</sup> Bya rgod po song nas ma lon tha  
<sup>3</sup> Khyod kha ta song na gang nas lon  
<sup>4</sup> Sgro rlung la ma gzed phyir ra shog  
<sup>5</sup> Nga'i glu rnga rgya mtsho'i gting na yod  
<sup>6</sup> Nya gser mig song nas ma lon tha  
<sup>7</sup> Khyod sbal ba song na gang lon  
<sup>8</sup> Kha 'dam 'gyog ma yed phyir ra shog

<sup>1</sup> ང་འི་སྐུ་མགོ་དགུང་སྟོན་གན་མ་ན་ཡོད།

<sup>2</sup> བྱ་ཁྲོད་པོ་སོང་ནས་མ་ལོན་ཐ།  
<sup>3</sup> རྒྱུད་ཁ་ཏ་སོང་ན་གང་ནས་ལོན།  
<sup>4</sup> རྩོ་རྒྱུང་ལ་མ་གཟེད་ཕྱིར་ར་ཤོག།  
<sup>5</sup> ངའི་སྤྱ་རྩ་རྒྱ་མཚའི་གཏིང་ན་ཡོད།  
<sup>6</sup> ཉ་གསེར་མིག་སོང་ནས་མ་ལོན་ཐ།  
<sup>7</sup> རྒྱུད་སྤྲུལ་བ་སོང་ན་གང་ལོན།  
<sup>8</sup> ཁ་འདམ་འགྲུག་མ་ཡེད་ཕྱིར་ར་ཤོག།

<sup>1</sup> My songs are the highest in the sky,  
<sup>2</sup> The great vultures can't reach them,  
<sup>3</sup> You, a crow, cannot get them either,  
<sup>4</sup> Do not lose your feathers, just stay here now.  
<sup>5</sup> My songs are on the bottom of the ocean,  
<sup>6</sup> The great fish can't fetch them.  
<sup>7</sup> You, a frog, can not fetch them either,  
<sup>8</sup> Do not get dirt in your mouth, just stay here now.

The villagers sit in rows and listen while the singers sing and walk up and down among the guests. Nowadays, people sing very few traditional songs, and young people sing popular Chinese songs, which are often accompanied by Chinese lyrics though they have Tibetan melodies.

Village families also invite sons or daughters who have married into other families to come home on these two days, and close relatives' new bride or groom are also invited.

On the afternoon of the fifth day, all families collect the *mchod rgyan* and *sder kha*, and store the food in wooden boxes and leather bags to be eaten later as part of normal meals. However, Lo sar still has not ended. Families hold singing and drinking parties for several days, except on the seventh and eighth days; people believe that those days are *nyin nag* 'black days' and they do nothing on these days.

## VI. CHILDREN'S LO SAR

Lo ja or Lo khang (Children's Lo sar) may occur between the third and the tenth day of Lo sar. Children (mostly under ten years of

age) from neighboring families get together in one family's courtyard and hold a party without any adults. The children usually decide which family to go to. The family's mother makes a small adobe stove before Lo sar. The children bring things from their home: cooking utensils food, bowls, and plates. All the families support the children by giving them whatever they need. Children use these things to celebrate Lo sar again by themselves, copying what their family did during Lo sar. They make simple food decorations and repeat the whole process of Lo sar. They sing songs and tell stories and riddles to each other during their play. This has two functions. First they have a lot of fun during Lo ja, and secondly they can also prepare themselves for adulthood.

## FIGURES



Gnyan ri: mountain god of Dme shul Clan



Ma Ni stone pile in Nor mgo Village

## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

- 'Phags pa འཕགས་པ། \*scripture  
 Bka' thang བཀའ་ཐང་། \*scripture  
 bsang བསང་། offering things to gods  
 bsang khri བསང་ཁྱི། offering platform  
 chibs bsu ཆེབས་བསུ། receive a lama  
 dgu do དགུ་དོ། 29<sup>th</sup> smoke  
 dgu khon དགུ་ཁོན། 29<sup>th</sup> dumplings  
 dianhua 电话 phone  
 dianshi 电视 TV  
 dkar zhun དཀར་འུན། bowl cake  
 dkon mchog gsum དཀོན་མཆོག་གསུམ། the three jewels  
 dmangs glu དམངས་གླུ། traditional song  
 Dme po དམེ་པོ། murderer  
 Dme shul དམེ་ཤུལ། \*clan  
 Dom lung དོམ་ལུང་། \*place  
 Dpon skor དཔོན་སྐོར། \*place  
 g.yang ra sgo bzhi གཡང་ར་སྐོ་བཞི། four symbolic animals  
 Gdugs dkar གདུགས་དཀར། \*scripture  
 glu shags གླུ་ཤགས། antiphonal song  
 gnyen ston གཉེན་སྟོན། wedding party  
 gnyer skor གཉེར་སྐོར། village group  
 go re dmar po གོ་རེ་དམར་པོ། red bread  
 Gser 'od གསེར་འོད། \*scripture  
 gzhi bdag གཞི་བདག། protector deity  
 Gzhis ka rtse གཞིས་ཀ་རུཙེ། \*place  
 Gzung bsdus གཟུང་བསྐྱུས། \*scripture  
 Haidong 海东 \*place  
 haoma 号码 phone number  
 jiyou 机油 gas



Ke res ཁེ་རེས། \*place  
 Kha sog ཁ་སོག་ \*place  
 khang ston ཁང་སྟོན། house warming party  
 khri ཁྲི། stage, seat  
 klu ལུ། naga  
 La gzhas ལ་གཞས། love song  
 la tse ལ་ཙེ། mountain god altar  
 lab zhun ལབ་ཞུན། basin cakes  
 lha pa ལྷ་པ། trance medium  
 lo chu ལོ་ཅུ། New Year water  
 Lo sar go re ལོ་སར་གོ་རེ། New Year bread  
 luosi 螺丝 screw  
 Ma Ni མ་ཤི། \*scripture  
 mchod khang མཚོད་ཁང་། shrine/altar  
 mchod rgyan མཚོད་རྒྱན། shrine decorations  
 Mdo མདོ། \*scripture  
 Mgo sbra མགོ་སྤ། \*place  
 mjal dar མངལ་དར། silk offering  
 mo pa མོ་པ། fortune teller  
 motuo 摩托 motor cycle  
 Mthso lho མཚོ་ལྷོ། \*place  
 Mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྒོན། \*place  
 mu 亩 0.666 hectares  
 Ningxia 宁夏 \*place  
 no'u ston རྟོ་སྟོན། three year olds party  
 Nor mgo རོར་མགོ་ \*place  
 nyin nag ཉིན་ནག། black days  
 phrug ཕུག། a dark red robe  
 Reb gong རེབ་གོང་། \*place  
 rgyu རྒྱུ། treasure  
 Rma lho རམ་ལྷོ། \*place

Rnying ma ba རྟིང་མ་བ། \*sect  
 rtsam pa རྩམ་བ། roasted barley flour  
 Rtse khog རྩེ་ཁོག་ \*place  
 rus sbal རུས་སྒལ། turtle  
 sder kha སྡེར་ཁ། food displayed for Lo sar  
 sdus rig སྡུས་རིག་ pieces-bread  
 Sgar ba སྒར་བ། \*place  
 Sgrol ma སྒྲོལ་མ། \*scripture  
 shouji 手机 mobile phone  
 shouyinji 收音机 radio  
 Skal bzang སྐལ་བཟང་། \*scripture  
 slog pa སྒོག་བ། sheep skin robe  
 smyung gnas སྤྱུང་གནས། fasting  
 sna ma སྤ་མ། transportation yak  
 sngags pa སྔགས་བ། tantric specialist  
 Stobs ldan སྟོབས་ལྡན། \*place  
 thang ga ཐང་ག་ religious paintings on silk or cloth  
 Ting 'dzin ིིང་འཛིན། \*scripture  
 tsha ru ཐ་རུ། lamb skin  
 wa zhwa ར་ལྷ། fox hat  
 Xunhua 循化 \*place  
 Yag bza' ཡག་བཟའ། \*place  
 zhun རུན། cake  
 zo ba ཟོ་བ། wooden bucket

WRITE NEW VOCABULARY HERE

WRITE YOUR EVALUATION HERE

## VOCABULARY

Ask these questions to a partner.

1. Tell me about your ancestors.
2. Do people sing any antiphonal songs in your village? Can you sing antiphonal songs?
3. Do women in your hometown usually braid their hair?
4. Do you know any endangered animals?
5. How is your family's financial condition?
6. Does your hometown have grid electricity?
7. Can you give some examples of good and bad omens?
8. Are there some prosperous families in your hometown? Tell me about them.
9. Do people in your hometown care about their reputation? Do you care about your reputation?
10. Have you ever seen a solar panel?

## EXERCISES

Do these exercises, then check your answers in the text.

Herders (both male and female) \_\_\_\_\_ much food, brick tea, milk, and such cooking utensils as teapots, cooking pots, and bowls to the pastures. They \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ together, and \_\_\_\_\_ traditional songs. It \_\_\_\_\_ not necessary that all families \_\_\_\_\_ people to herd but usually one person from each family \_\_\_\_\_. Neighbors or close friends typically \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ together.

Lo ja or Lo khang (Children's Lo sar) occurs from the third to the tenth day of Lo sar. Chnredli (mostly under ten years of age) from neighboring families get terhtego in one family's courtyard and hold a pryta without any adults. The children usually ddiece which family to go to. The family's mother makes a small adebo stove before Lo sar. The children bring things from their home: cooking uteilsns food, bowls, and plates. All the families support the children by giving them wharevet they need. Children use these things to ceetarbel Lo sar again by themselves, copying what their fylima did during Lo sar. They make simple food decorations and

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People believe that the ancestors of the Dme shu Clan (come/came) from Sa skya, in contemporary Gzhis ka rtse County, Gzhis ka rtse Prefecture, Tibetan Autonomous Region. Their family clan was (call/called) Kon. In the thirteenth century, a man called Lha rthe brag sna pa (1235-1280 CE), was (send/sent) by the Sa skya leader, 'Gro mgon chos rgyal 'phags ba, to the area of Reb gong County. He and subsequent generations of his family (settle/settled) there. Some time in the fourteenth century, Kon clan member, 'Jam dbyangs kro rgyal, (kill/killed) someone from his village. After the murder, he (flee/fled) to live in the southern part of Reb gong. The area he fled to (was/is) where the Dme shu Clan now (live/lives/lived). There (is/are) still many people from the Kon clan (lives/living) in Reb gong. Since 'Jam dbyangs kro rgyal (kill/killed) someone in his own village, people (start/started) to (call/called) him *dme po* 'murderer.' As a result, his descendants are now (call/called) Dme po thsang 'Murder Family' and the clan is (call/called) the Dme shu Clan.

## CONTENT

1. What is the difference between a clan and a village?
2. What are two explanations for the name Nor mgo?
3. How is religion in Nor mgo different from religion in your hometown?
4. What kind of things do Nor mgo villagers use Chinese words for?
5. What does the author say about village families?
6. How has village culture changed in recent years? Why?
7. What breads are made in Nor mgo? Does your family make such breads?
8. What types of parties do families hold during Lo sar? Do you hold such parties in your hometown?
9. Who herds livestock during Lo sar?
10. Summarize the folk songs.
11. Talk about children's Lo sar.
12. Look at and discuss the images at the end of the text.

# TIBETAN NEW YEAR IN ZUR THOG MDA' VILLAGE

Ye shes sgrol ma

## PART ONE: VILLAGE LIFE

### I. ZUR THOG MDA' VILLAGE LOCATION

Zur thog mda' Village, Dkar mdzes County, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, is eighty-five kilometers from Dkar mdzes County Town. Dkar mdzes County is one of eighteen counties<sup>88</sup> in Dkar mdzes Prefecture. Zur thog mda' Village is located on a mountain and is one of eight villages in the Stong skor Community. The residents are Khams Tibetan. Village houses dot the mountainside from top to bottom, extending some 300 meters up the slope.

### II. VILLAGE NAME

Zur thog mda' Village is part of Stong skor/ Stong 'khor Community. Locals refer to themselves as Stong 'khor ba, 'Stong 'khor people'. The name Stong 'khor 'gather to an empty place' is explained by this account.

A hunter once came to a strange place after pursuing a deer for a long time. He noticed the place had abundant rich soil in which crops could be planted. He decided to bring his family there to start a new life. From that time on, more and more people went to live there. Therefore, 'gather to the empty place' became this place's name.

People also spell this place's name 'Stong skor', meaning 'a thousand villages around this village'. Stong skor, not Stong 'khor, is the preferred name.

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<sup>88</sup> The other seventeen counties are 'Ba' thang, Brag 'go, Brgyad zur, 'Dab pa, Dar rtse mdo, Dpal yul, Gser shul, Gser rta, Lcags zam kha, Li thang, Rong brag, Nyag chu kha, Nyag rong, Phyag phreng, Sde rong, Rta'u, and Sde dge.

### III. VILLAGE LIVELIHOODS

Zur thog mda' Village is a farming village, and a few families have both farmland and livestock. Barley, peas, and potatoes are cultivated. Most families harvest once a year. Not long after Losar, they fertilize and plow their fields. Women sow the fields after men plow them with yaks in March. The villagers then have to weed the fields and, in September, harvesting begins. After that, men plow the fields once again.

Most families have four or five yaks: two male yaks for plowing and two or three females for milk. Before 2004, some families had many yaks which they herded in a pasture eight kilometers from the village. Some family members stayed in black tents year-round. They also had homes in the village. At that time, they earned 2,000-4,000 RMB a year selling butter and cheese. However, in 2009 most families had sold their yaks, because herding far from home was considered very difficult.

### IV. RELIGION

Zur thog mda' villagers follow the Dge lugs pa sect of Tibetan Buddhism. Most elders take *sdom pa*<sup>89</sup> on *nya mchod dus chen*.<sup>90</sup>

Stong skor Monastery is located atop the mountain above Zur thog mda' Village. All nearby villagers come to Stong skor Monastery to worship, circumambulate and to attend such events as high lamas' teachings and '*cham*'.<sup>91</sup> The monastery was established in the fourteenth century by Zla' rgyal mtsho, a meditator and incarnate lama. The following account describes the

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<sup>89</sup> *Sdom pa*, means fasting or abstaining from meat, alcohol, and smoking. This is practiced on any *nya mchod dus chen* (see below). Another type of fasting is called *smiyung gnas*. This is more complex and usually takes place over about twenty days. For this fast, the only participants are elders or other people who do not have constant work to do. Participants gather together to receive teachings from a high lama. They are taught new scriptures to chant.

<sup>90</sup> *Nya mchod dus chen*, 'auspicious dates', are the first, fifteenth, and thirtieth days of each lunar month. The fifteenth is considered especially auspicious.

<sup>91</sup> A monastic dance performed by monks.



first Stong skor zhabs drung lama:

A meditator from Central Tibet came to Khams, and lived in a cave meditating. He dreamed that a cuckoo flew to his meditation cave, hovered, circled the cave three times, and then flew down in front of him near his water bowl. The cuckoo then took the water-bowl in its beak and flew away. The meditator saw the cuckoo fly to a nearby mountain where it put the bowl upside-down on the mountain top. When the meditator awoke the next morning, he saw his water-bowl was, indeed, not in the cave. Recalling the dream, he went to the mountain and found his water-bowl on the upper slope of the mountain, upside-down, just as in his dream. He considered this to be an auspicious site and recruited some monks to build a monastery there. That was the origin of Stong skor Monastery and the meditator was the first Stong skor zhabs drung.

His reincarnation was afterwards recognized as the master of the monastery, and is now in the thirteenth incarnation. The current reincarnation was born in about 1976 and is currently studying in India.

If there is a seriously sick or dying person in a family, a high lama, usually a *dge bshes*<sup>92</sup> from the monastery is invited to the sick person's home to chant. At present, there are only one or two *dge bshes* in the monastery.

The ability to visit Lha sa and Se ra, 'Bras spungs, and Dga ldan monasteries, and other holy places in Tibet, is a huge dream for local people. For those who visit Lha sa, the next dream is to visit India to attend the Dus 'khor dwang chen. However, very few can achieve this dream.

Religious activities such as *smyung gnas*,<sup>93</sup> 'fasting', are held in winter, for there is little work and villagers have much leisure time during *smyung gnas*. Most village elders gather at a religious activity site (usually the monastery). A high lama gives daily Buddhist teachings and villagers chant such scriptures as Mani, Si d+hl, and Sgrol ma individually or in groups.

A different *Smyung gnas* is held just prior to Lo sar (managed by Zur thog mda' villagers) and again depends on which lama the

<sup>92</sup> Highest degree of a learned monk.

<sup>93</sup> See explanation given above in footnote two.

village invites. A lama from Stong skor Village or another village may be invited. The same lama does not come because he has his own responsibilities in the monastery. Byams chub sems pa'i sdom pa<sup>94</sup> is also generally held.

The other *smying gnas* managed by Stong skor Monastery is held after Lo sar and is referred to as Rka mo mchod brgyad.<sup>95</sup> It is held to ease the suffering of all sentient beings. Those who participate in *smying gnas* fast on each of two days. During these two days, they cannot eat, drink, or speak. This generates compassion for *yi dwags*,<sup>96</sup> and *dud 'gro*.<sup>97</sup>

On the day after fasting, fasters may eat (but not meat), drink, and speak after the monastery offers morning tea. The monastery also offers *thug pa*.<sup>98</sup> Family members come with lunch during this time.

*Sdom pa* is organized by a family who volunteers for the task and is usually held on such auspicious dates as the first, fifteenth, and thirtieth days of the lunar month. An available knowledgeable lama is invited to give a teaching. *Sdom pa* is held by villagers in the village chanting hall or sometimes in a villager's home. Anyone is welcome to join the fasting.

Fasters cannot eat before or after lunch, but they may drink. Much milk tea is drunk in the morning. After returning home for lunch, participants wash their hands and sit on seats no higher than about thirty centimeters. People should not eat again after they move from their seat, so they do not move until they are full. The beds on which fasters sleep must also be no higher than thirty centimeters. Normal life is resumed at sunrise the next day.

Each family has a shrine room with statues and pictures of Buddha Sakyathupa, Buddha Sakyamuni, Green Tara, White Tara, Guru Rinpoche,<sup>99</sup> *Spyan ras gzigs*,<sup>100</sup> pictures of famous lamas

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<sup>94</sup> Bodhisattva vow for compassionate fasting.

<sup>95</sup> A teaching on the six sacred syllables, Om mani padme hum.

<sup>96</sup> The beings trapped in the Hungry Ghosts' Realm.

<sup>97</sup> The beings in the Animal Realm, who are in a dark world of ignorance.

<sup>98</sup> Noodles.

<sup>99</sup> Also called Slob dpon pad ma 'byung gnas, Sage Padmasambhava.

<sup>100</sup> Avalokiteshvara, the Buddha of compassion with a thousand hands and a thousand eyes.

including Stong skor zhabs drung, pictures of protector deities including Mgon po and Dpal ldan lha mo, and the home deity<sup>101</sup> of each family.

Lamps are placed in front of the images and pictures and lit every morning and every night. Seven small copper bowls are filled with clean water. Plastic flowers and lit incense are also present in the shrine. The shrine is separated from other rooms and has a bed made of conifer wood on one side of the room used by lamas to sit or sleep on when they are invited to the home.

Thog thog chen a gzhi bdag<sup>102</sup> on Dung dkar gdong Mountain opposite the village was the home protector deity of the fifth Stong skor zhabs drung's family according to elders. He was such a strict deity that he killed a handmaid of Stong skor zhabs drung's family after she lost a needle. The Stong skor zhabs drung then confined the deity to Dung dkar gdong Mountain, where he became the mountain god and protector of Zur thog mda' village. Men perform *bsang mchod*,<sup>103</sup> scatter *rlung rta*<sup>104</sup> and tie scripture cloth around the mountain god's altar on the thirteenth day of the third lunar month, on the fourth day of the sixth lunar month, as well as the first day of Lo sar.

Stong skor gnas ri is another sacred mountain seven kilometers from Zur thog mda' Village. Elders say this is the most sacred mountain in all Tibetan areas but, because the Tibetan administration was in Lha sa, Tsa ri, the sacred mountain there, became more important and Stong skor gnas ri was relegated to the number two position. Every bird year in the twelve year zodiac cycle is a special year for the mountain. People from different areas (Lha sa, various areas in Dkar mdzes County, and other counties of Dkar mdzes Prefecture such as Gser rta and Nyag rong)

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<sup>101</sup> Each household has a home deity which protects the family members and their property.

<sup>102</sup> Mountain god or the god of a territory.

<sup>103</sup> Burning juniper needles and praying.

<sup>104</sup> Wind horse. These are scripture papers with images of a horse with symbols of safety and wellbeing for one's life. People usually scatter *rlung rta* on mountain tops or high areas before and during a journey. Now *rlung rta* with only pictures of horses are used because people think it is not good to have scriptures on them, because *rlung rta* on the ground may be stood on by people, disrespecting the scripture.

come to the mountain to worship and circumambulate throughout the year. Villagers from Stong skor and people from Dkar mdzes bring tents and stay on the mountain, circumambulating while taking vacation during the early summer every year. There are two or three hermit monks living in caves on this mountain and several old people (usually impoverished elderly widows) living in one-room mud huts. They circumambulate the mountain frequently and try to live peacefully for the remainder of their lives.

A nunnery on Stong skor gnas ri has approximately thirty nuns.

There are two male diviners in the village, though women may also practice divination. There are also two *dung 'khor*<sup>105</sup> and a village temple on one side of the village mountain.

## V. HOUSES

Stong skor Monastery is on the top left of the mountain and one third of the left side of the mountain is covered with monks' houses. The right side of the mountain is full of villagers' houses.

There are three footpaths on the slope: one on either side and one in middle of the slope. Most houses are attached, though the heights are slightly different. Villagers can enter each other's homes via either house gates or roofs, because the flat roofs are connected. A ladder made of a single notched log leads from the balcony to the roof, where barley is traditionally dried.

The first floor of a two-story house is made of stone and adobe and is for livestock. The second floor is made of painted wood. Traditional houses have one or two windows hinged at the top. They open upwards and outwards. A hook hanging from the upper side of the window is used to secure the window on the lower side of the wooden frame. However, in recent years, large, sliding windows have become popular.

If the house is in an open, flat place, a courtyard is built. Houses on the upper part of the mountain are very close to each other and there is insufficient space for courtyards.

Each house usually has a shrine room, living room, kitchen, one or two other storerooms, and two or three small bedrooms. People stay in the kitchen most of the time. The living room has

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<sup>105</sup> Big scripture wheel houses.

large pieces of furniture that local Tibetan artists have painted with bright Tibetan designs. A floor-to-ceiling cabinet covers the living room wall. The lower part consists of two wooden chests used for storing dried barley and peas. If it is full it suggests auspiciousness and wealth. The upper part is a large cabinet used to house bedding such as *phrug*,<sup>106</sup> and *tsha ru*,<sup>107</sup> which also symbolizes wealth. A household devoid of food and warm winter bedding is considered pitiful. Two or more tables are placed side by side in the center of the room and wooden couch-beds covered with carpets are placed on both sides of the tables. This room is rarely used in daily life; it is only used when entertaining guests during Lo sar, as well as for wedding celebrations. Guests sleep in the living room if they spend the night in the home.

In the past, village carpenters designed the village houses. However, this is now done by Han Chinese carpenters.

## VI. EDUCATION

Approximately twenty percent of villagers are literate. The majority of literate adults are older men who were taught to read and write by Tibetan by monk relatives when they were children.

Other literate villagers attended primary school for two or three years, but then dropped out to work at home. Two villagers graduated from Dkar mdzes County Normal School, which was previously a teachers' school, but has now been turned into the Khams byang<sup>108</sup> High School. These two graduates now work as teachers at the primary school, which is a kilometer from Zur thog mda' Village. There are currently no village boys or girls in middle school in the Dkar mdzes County Township.

Some families have more than one child attending the local primary school, while others send no children at all. The level of education for a child depends on a family's economic condition and the number of workers in the home.

Around 1998, there were six grades at the local primary school. However the fifth and sixth grades had no students because

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<sup>106</sup> ~felt.

<sup>107</sup> Lamb skin robe.

<sup>108</sup> Northern Khams.

parents did not let students continue their studies. Most families think that a child going to school means less labor and more economic burdens. On the other hand, they highly value education and respect educated people. They think being a student is evidence of having led a good previous life and such people are admired, regardless of age. In contrast, common, uneducated villagers denigrate themselves, saying they are as stupid as yaks. Nevertheless, sending children to school is possible only for few families.

Graduating from school does not necessarily improve job prospects, and it is considered risky to spend time and money on an uncertain investment. The supreme goal of attending school is to get a government job and receive regular wages. Not only is the salary attractive, but such jobs raise a family's status. On the other hand, people worry that, by investing in education, their child might become neither good at studying nor useful as a laborer.

Three or four families in Zur thog mda' Village have sent their children to the county primary school. Still, there are only one or two students in the county middle school, two graduates from the county secondary school, and one student in college.

## PERSONAL ACCOUNT OF THE AUTHOR.

When I was seven, my parents decided to send me to the primary school in Dkar mdzes County Town because I could live in my Grandmother's home there. I did not understand the difference between attending the county school and the village school but, when I heard the approving words from villagers, I felt attending the county school must mean something good. Later, I also realized that, considering the distance and the expenditure, it was difficult for villagers to send their children to the county school. Attending the county school was even more complicated if children had nowhere to stay. Consequently, sending children to the county town school was a dream most villagers never realized.

"Yekha, study hard in Dkar mdzes. You have the good fortune to get an education," village elders said when they heard I was attending school. "What a lucky girl you are! You must have accumulated much merit in your last life," other villagers said. I was treated respectfully when I returned to the village during holidays. I have been attending school for more than fifteen years, and some

people are impatient with my 'endless' study.' "Yekha, when will you graduate? When will you be official? " is what I often hear nowadays.

## VII. TRANSPORTATION

Prior to 2001, the road from Zur thog mda' Village to Dkar mdzes County Township was bumpy and muddy, and was only used by trucks transporting goods from Dkar mdzes County Township to Zur thog mda' Village. To travel, villagers had to wait for trucks and then sit on top of them. There was no set schedule for truck arrivals and departures. If someone wanted to go to the County Township or return to the village, then they might have had to wait on the street for several hours.

In 2001, Stong skor Monastery bought a bus that goes to Dkar mdzes County Township early in the morning and returns back to the village at two o'clock in the afternoon on a daily basis. It took more than four hours to make the journey before this bus service; now, it takes only one and a half hours. Before the monastery bus service, Lo sar goods that villagers purchased were transported to the village by a truck going to the County Town. Now the transportation of Lo sar goods is much more convenient. Road conditions are also much better than before.

Before trucks and buses, people seldom went to the county town. If they went, they rode yaks and horses or walked.

Over half of village families now own motorcycles.

## VIII. ELECTRICITY

The Gtsang bo River flows past the right side of the mountain where the village is located, and the Stong skor local government is located on the other side of the river. A small hydroelectric station is situated near the foot of the mountain, by the river.

The village now has electricity. Televisions, DVD and VCD players, and refrigerators are now common. Because of the distance between the village and the county town, villagers do not regularly buy vegetables. Refrigerators allow locals to keep both meat and vegetables for longer periods than before.

An electricity station was built in about 1990, but the

power was so weak that it could barely light a sixty watt bulb. After the new power station was built in Wa la 'dar Village (about three kilometers from Zur thog mda' Village) in 1999, the villagers began buying TVs. However, because they cannot receive television channels without a satellite dish, villagers first bought cheap VCD players. Around 2002, families began buying satellite dishes. Before TVs and VCDs, a few families had tape players and radios.

Electricity was unreliable in the winter in 2009 and blackouts from half a day to two days were common.

## IX. CLOTHING

Men and children in Zur thog mda' Village wear modern clothes in daily life. Women wear Tibetan robes daily. Except for some older women, most women wear *rgya gar phu med*.<sup>109</sup> In other Khams areas, like Yul shul, this robe is called *Lha sa phu med* 'Lhasa sleeveless robe'. It is worn by women who were born after the 1960s in warm seasons. *Tsha ru* are worn in cold periods. Other robes including *phrug* and *a ldu*<sup>110</sup> Tibetan shirts. Sashes include *dar khrug ske rag*, *a ldu ske rag*, and sashes made from other kinds of cloth, which are worn on ordinary days.

*Phrug* is made from high quality wool knitted in long pieces about thirty centimeters wide and three to four meters long. Black and maroon are common colors. Maroon *phrug* is popular with both young and old people. The *chab ma*,<sup>111</sup> is worn by women on the waist on special occasions.

Silk sashes are used in daily life and *a ldu ske rag* are worn on special days. Shirts made of *a ldu* are called *a ldu rngul len*, and may be white, red, or dark purple, though white is especially

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<sup>109</sup> Literally 'Indian sleeveless robes.' This refers to a style of Tibetan robe thought to have come from Lha sa.

<sup>32</sup> A kind of cloth originally produced in India. People buy it from Lhasa or directly from India when they go to there.

<sup>33</sup> A women's waistband ornament, ideally made of silver. It is not, however, necessarily made of silver, for it requires more than one kilogram of silver, which ordinary families cannot afford. Therefore, people often use aluminum instead. Gold, coral, turquoise, and other jewels are also found on the *chab ma*.



common and popular with youths. Red and dark purple *a ldu* shirts are mostly worn by older generations. Unlike *a ldu* shirts which are very simple, the *a ldu ske rag* is colorful and features complex designs. Unlike ordinary sashes, *a ldu ske rag* are expensive. Men also wear *a ldu* pants under their robes.

Women tie a *pang khebs* 'apron' on front of the lower part of the robe. In the past elderly women or married women used a black *pang khebs* and girls used either a black or colorful *pang khebs* called *Lha sa pang khebs*. However, married women and women in their thirties and forties have recently begun to wear Lhasa aprons which are not as colorful as those worn by girls.

Some older women wear their hair in many braids with colorful hair-pendants tied at the end of each braid, which hang down to their waist through the *ske rag*. Most women, however, plait their hair into one braid which hangs down their back or is coiled at the back of their head.

## PART TWO: LO SAR

### I. BEFORE LO SAR

Meat is essential for Lo sar and winter in general. Rich families and families with many yaks butcher a yak when winter comes. Families unable to afford a whole yak buy more than one hundred kilograms of yak meat. There is no specific time to prepare meat as it can easily be stored in refrigerators. Villagers often butcher yaks and buy meat in December. People may spend 1,000 to 2,000 RMB, about half of the money set aside for Lo sar food expenses, on meat.

Wild yams and white barley produced in Han Chinese areas as well as vegetables, fruits such as apples and oranges, which are inexpensive and can keep for a long time, candy, and soft drinks are also purchased for Lo sar.

## II. HOUSE CLEANING AND 'CHAM

The twenty-second and twenty-third days of *Sprel zla*<sup>112</sup> are cleaning days in the village. The senior woman of the family takes everything that can be removed from the kitchen to the balcony, then sweeps and scrubs the ceilings, walls, large furniture, and adobe stoves, removing dust from every corner. She may do this by herself or with assistance from other women of the family.

The things which were taken out from the room are cleaned and put to dry in the sun, then put back in their place once they have dried. The whole process takes six to seven hours. Dust is taken to a cross roads and discarded so that passers-by step on it, symbolizing the suppression of a family's inauspiciousness and disease.

Stong skor Monastery has *gos 'cham* on the twenty-eighth day and *'bag 'cham*<sup>113</sup> on the twenty-ninth. Visitors to the monastery wear their best clothes and bring such snacks as sunflower seeds, peanuts, candies, jujubes, and raisins. Young people make themselves attractive because these two days are an excellent opportunity to meet and make friends.

The dance is held on these two days to exorcise all harm and inauspiciousness from the old year and prevent evil in the coming New Year. A *gtor ma*<sup>114</sup> is painted red and attached to a board during these two days. Monks dance around the *gtor ma* while other monks sitting high above them chant. At the end of the two days, the *gtor ma* is cut into several pieces and all the monks form a long procession, carrying the *gtor ma*. Men follow with rifles. The dismembered *gtor ma* is taken to a mountain cliff and discarded, accompanied by gunshots, after high lamas chant for about ten minutes. People stay to watch the whole dance,

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<sup>112</sup> The twelfth Tibetan month, the Monkey Month. The other months, in order, are: 1. *Bya zla* 'Bird Month', 2. *Khyi zla* 'Dog Month', 3. *Phag zla* 'Pig Month', 4. *Byi ba zla* 'Mouse Month', 5. *Glang zla* 'Bull Month', 6. *Stag zla* 'Tiger Month', 7. *Yos zla* 'Rabbit Month', 8. *'Brug zla* 'Dragon Month', 9. *Sbrul zla* 'Serpent Month', 10. *Rta zla* 'Horse Month', and 11. *Lug zla* 'Sheep Month'.

<sup>113</sup> *'Bag 'cham* uses masks depicting various protector deities, whereas *gos 'cham* does not.

<sup>114</sup> A model of a devil which is made from *rtsam pa* (barley flour) by monks.

especially elders.

### III. DEEP-FRIED BREAD

There is no specific date to prepare deep fried-bread. It is often made after house cleaning. Wood is chopped by males and burned in an adobe stove to heat a pot of rapeseed oil. Dough is also made.

*Kha zas* is a fried bread that is plaited into a braid. A large piece of dough is flattened with a rolling pin and then cut it into long strips which, in turn, are made into shorter strips. Three or four slashes are made with a knife on the shorter strip. Then, the bread-makers drill through one side of the shorter strip twice so it looks like a braid.

The dough is then placed into bubbling oil. A wood stick is used to stir the dough pieces until they turn golden-brown. A large strainer is used to remove them. The hot bread is then moved to a room and placed on clean, flat boards.

### IV. LO SAR EVE

Women collect fresh juniper needles from the mountains on Lo sar Eve, to be offered on the following day. These fresh juniper needles are for *bsang mchod* for the mountain god as well as *bsang mchod* for Stong skor gnas ri that is offered by the village men on the third day of Losar. The juniper needles must be freshly collected on Lo sar Eve. Those collected earlier are burned and result in the souls of the deceased bursting into flames.

Cleaning rooms and courtyards is also an important activity on Lo sar Eve. Women and girls sweep the rooms, balcony, and doorway carefully so they do not have to sweep them during Lo sar. To began Lo sar in a nice, clean way is very important because it will influence the rest of the year in a positive way.

Cleaning and cooking *gro ma* is also done on Lo sar Eve because it requires lots of time. This is the first meal eaten on the first day of the year.

Although cleanliness and tidiness for the New Year are key concerns, people do not wash their clothes, hair, or bodies, nor do they have haircuts on given days. Personal hygiene is addressed on

the twenty-third of the twelfth lunar month.

Village men and boys check the date when cutting their hair. Cutting the hair on the wrong day may result in bad luck or illness.

## PERSONAL ACCOUNTS OF TWO FEMALE VILLAGERS.

"Don't cut your hair on the first day," said Nor dzos, a female villager in Zur thog mda' Village. "According to the Tibetan calendar, your life will be shortened if you cut your hair on the first day. My monk uncles, great monk uncles, and great-great monk uncles always cut their hair on the first day of the lunar month and, because of that, none of them had long lives. Later we realized this superstition really is true, just like the books say."

"My mother always chose the eleventh day to cut my brother's hair," a Zur thog mda' Village girl, Mkha' dga said. "Cutting hair on the eleventh day can increase your intelligence, so my mother says it is the best day for students to cut their hair."

Offering *mchod pa*<sup>115</sup> to the Three Jewels<sup>116</sup> and the Buddhist deities in the family shrine room should also be done on this day. *Mchod pa* includes candies, peanuts, sunflower seeds, various fruits, cooked *gro ma*, and *phye phul*.<sup>117</sup>

Everyone should eat a little of this *phye phul* before they eat anything on the first day of Lo sar.

## V. THE FIRST DAY OF LO SAR

Most elders sleep while younger villagers stay awake on Lo sar eve. Around three or four a.m. on the morning of Lo sar, the male family head begins burning juniper needles and prays loudly while circumambulating the fire pot and scattering barley and rice around it. This pot is placed in an upper corner of the balcony or in the

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<sup>115</sup> Offerings.

<sup>116</sup> Buddha, Dharma (Buddhist teachings) and Sangha (Buddhist community).

<sup>117</sup> *Rtsam pa* mixed with butter, cheese, and sugar.

courtyard of each household. It can be circumambulated if it is in the courtyard and is only used for burning juniper needles.

Women get up at about four a.m. to fetch the first bucket of water of the year. Village girls visit each others' balconies when it is still dawn, taking *kha btags*<sup>118</sup> or fresh juniper needles to the stream by the mountain and, after spraying water three times in the air as an offering, they fetch water, leaving the *kha btags* or juniper needles on a white stone at the bank. The first water of the New Year is as precious as lion's milk, and thus called *seng ge 'o ma*.<sup>119</sup> Family members wash their faces and hands with this water, and then fill seven small copper bowls kept in the shrine to honor the Three Jewels and the deities. Tea is made with the remainder of the water. The senior woman or other women of a home may fetch this water from a small spring at the foot of the mountain opposite the village, less than half a kilometer away. This spring water is from the Stong skor gnas ri and is pure and clean.

When the entire family has gotten up, the senior woman brings the *phye phul* to the kitchen from the shrine room. Each person takes a small amount of *phye phul* with a spoon. Some like to take a little more *phye phul* in the bowl to lick it or make *rtsam pa*, so they will not feel greasy when they eat *gro ma*, which is eaten with much melted butter. Each person generally has one or one and a half bowls of *gro ma*, after which people may eat as they like. The tea should be milk-tea, as it is auspicious to look at and drink white milky tea during the New Year. Even a very poor family who rarely drinks milk-tea will try their best to have milk-tea at this time. It is important not to feel hungry on this day because feeling hungry, sick, unhappy, or angry on the first day of the year, means that these feelings will continue for the rest of year. Inauspicious actions, words, and feelings are avoided.

Monks in the monastery go to their homes after morning chanting. The monastery gives a loaf of bread to each monk as a New Year present. Monks return to their monastery on the sixth day of the New Year.

People do not leave their homes on the first day of the New Year except to visit close relatives. Everyone should be with their family on this day. If there is garbage on the floor, it is not swept away with a broom during Lo sar (at least for the first three days)

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<sup>118</sup> Usually a piece of long white silk.

<sup>119</sup> Lion's milk.

because sweeping away garbage symbolizes sweeping away a family's wealth. People also avoid spending money or giving away things on that day.

## VI. THE SECOND DAY

People start visiting close relatives on the second day of Losar. Visits are never made during the New Year without taking gifts and hosts do not allow guests to leave empty-handed. Deep fried-bread, candy, and fruits are taken to homes as gifts and hosts give beef, *gro ma*, cloth, shirts, and money as gifts. Immediate family members and close relatives chat and have meals together on the first and second day.

## VII. THE THIRD DAY

On the third day of Lo sar, men go to *bsang mchod*. The male head of each family rides a motorcycle (in the past, a horse) and takes food, *rlung rta*, and pieces of scripture cloth to Stong skor gnas ri to celebrate the ritual for Rigs gsum mgon po.<sup>120</sup> Only men go there to burn juniper needles in front of the deities and pray loudly, while scattering barley and rice around the deities' *lab tse*.<sup>121</sup> Afterwards, they circumambulate the entire sacred mountain while scattering the *rlung rta* and tying scripture cloths on juniper trees on to the upper mountain slopes where they can blow in the wind. *Rlung rta* are bought from *sde mgon po*<sup>122</sup> in Dkar mdzes County Town which produces wind horses and scripture cloths. The villagers may also buy scripture cloths from there, but most

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<sup>120</sup> The Three Protectors of Knowledge are Manjushri (God of Wisdom), Vajrapani (Protector Deity of Energy and Power) and Avalokiteshvara (God of Mercy).

<sup>121</sup> The *lab tse* is a shrine dedicated to a local deity. It usually takes the form of a bundle of giant arrows and other weapons set into a stone or other base. Some people believe that the deity actually resides in the *lab tse* while others believe it is simply a site at which to worship the deity.

<sup>122</sup> The religious house of a guardian deity called *mgon po*.

families choose to make them themselves. There are scripture printing boards in some homes in the village, so villagers buy different (white, red, blue, green, and yellow) gauzes to print such scriptures as *ma Ni*, *Sgrol ma*, and *Si d+hI*.

#### PERSONAL ACCOUNT OF CHOS DAD, A VILLAGE MALE.

Each man rode a motorcycle, though some were driving cars. We made a long line driving to the mountain. After we arrived at the foot of the mountain, we parked our motorcycles and cars along the road and started to burn juniper needles on the first mountain altar. Everyone prayed loudly and we slowly climbed the mountain, scattering *rlung rta*, and tying scripture cloths on the big trees where the wind could blow them.

The whole mountain has three peaks and one protector deity is on each. We worshipped each deity in turn. Then we circumambulated the whole mountain once. Around eleven a.m. we all gathered at the foot of the mountain to eat lunch.

We took out our lunch bags and sat in a circle on the grassland near the mountain stream. Some men started a fire to boil tea while others chatted, joked, and laughed loudly. Everyone had brought cooked and raw beef, fried bread, liquor, and beer. After a while, we started wrestling, racing, and dancing. We had a really great time there. We returned to the village at around three in the afternoon.

#### VIII. VISITING FROM THE FOURTH TO THE THIRTEENTH DAY

Villagers start to invite both relatives and non-relatives to visit after the fourth day. Villagers visit most other village households. This is deemed enjoyable and strengthens village relationships. Seeing what changes have taken place in others' homes in the past year is also a point of interest.

Beef, candies, dried fruits, cookies, liquor, beer, Pepsi, and other soft drinks are put on tables in the living room. These foods and drinks are called *sder kha sgrig shyad*. Visitors do not eat much because they want to be polite; they only nibble on a few sunflower seeds when the host urges them to eat. Hot steamed beef

dumplings are also brought to the guests.

During the visits, men visit other men, women visit other women, young girls visit their peers and friends, and so on. Moreover, young peers stay and sleep together for a few days in one home. Boys usually do this in the village public house, *hen bsdu*.<sup>123</sup> They collect food and fuel from each of their families and cook together. Staying away from their families for a few days gives them a feeling of unfettered freedom.

## PERSONAL ACCOUNT OF A CE MKHA' 'GRO, A VILLAGE FEMALE.

"Come, come! Come to our house! " came a girl's cry. I went to the living room as she climbed down the ladder from the roof. When she appeared, she took my arm and drew me out of the room.

"Don't be in such a hurry. I just invited her to my home. Let her stay a little while," said the senior woman of the home.

"It's already enough. It's time to go to my home," the girl said, laughing and pulling me out of the room again. Then another girl appeared, hurried to me, took my arm, and said, "I found you here, come to my home now." I was outside the house then, and the two girls continued pulling me in different directions, each saying, "Come to my home!" Later, after I promised to come to her home by myself, the second girl let me go and said repeatedly, "You must come!" and then went to grab other guests.

## IX. THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH DAYS

The village holds dances in the public house on the sixth and seventh days. The dancers practice their dances for ten to fifteen days before Lo sar. Dancers are selected from each household, and are usually under thirty except in families which have a family member who is seriously sick or recently deceased. Traditional circle dances and modern Tibetan dances are performed. They perform the whole morning and have more dances after lunch. The circle dance is performed in the morning with dancers singing traditional dancing songs while dancing. Modern Tibetan dancing

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<sup>123</sup> Meaning collect and gather, this oral term has no written form.



shows are performed after the circle dancing in the afternoon, with a CD player and loud speakers. Before about 1992, villagers danced to a flute played by a villager, but after tape players became common in the village, people began using them instead of traditional instruments. After these dances are held, there are no other specific activities until the fourteenth day.

## X. THE FOURTEENTH DAY

Stong skor Monastery has a meeting of all the monks on the fourteenth day of Lo sar. Scriptures known as Smon lam are chanted. Elder villagers, most of whom are over fifty, comprise the majority of the attendees.

A man from each household gathers in the yard in front of the monastery's major chanting hall on this day. These men cut wood to prepare for the following day's activities at the monastery.

## XI. THE FIFTEENTH DAY

Volunteers give money to the monk on the fifteenth and final day of Lo sar. Most people offer one RMB to each of the 200 monks. The monks sit in rows in the monastery courtyard and donors, dressed in their best clothes, walk in a long line, holding new, clean bills in their hands and other money in their bags and robe pouches. They hand money to the monks one by one. It is a great honor to offer money to the monks and families are especially enthusiastic about this if their family situation has improved over the last year. Some give money to monks prior to this day in secret.

After these offerings are made, the monastery holds a short '*cham*' to close the New Year period. The crowd particularly enjoys a humorous performance after '*cham*' in which young monks inside a cloth elephant gallivant through the crowd, making people laugh.

Most people fast or chant at home after they return from the monastery, because the fifteenth is an auspicious day

## XII. WEDDINGS

Weddings are usually held after harvest because people have less work at this time and it is believed that weddings bring disaster to crops.

Weddings may be held before Lo sar, during Lo sar, and a few days after Lo sar. If the bride goes to live in the groom's home, the wedding is held in the last ten days of a month. If the groom goes to live in the bride's home, the wedding should be held during the first ten days of a month. Locals say this is because men's status is higher than women's. The first ten days of a month are seen as a good time to initiate a new male member into a family.

## XIII. MAKING OATHS

Village males drink alcohol and this is seen as a major social problem. High lamas have recently begun to mention the negative effects of drinking alcohol more often and, consequently, many males have taken group oaths before high lamas to stop drinking. Some do this for self-imposed reasons, others because of other reasons and pressure from family members. The period of abstinence varies. Some want to abstain for a year, others for five years, and some for their whole life. Many begin abstaining from drink from the first day of Lo sar, and others begin after the fifth day of Lo sar, after enjoying some parties and visits. There are also many people, male and female, who take oaths to abstain from eating meat on any *nya mchod dus chen*.

## FIGURES



Figure 1: A section of Zur tog mda' Village.



Figure 2: The Gtsang bo River, left and center, and an unnamed small stream, right.

## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

- 'bag 'cham* འབག་འཆམ། dancing with masks
- 'Bras spungs* འབྲས་སྤྱངས། \*monastery
- 'cham* འཆམ། monastic dance
- a ldu ske rag* ཨ་ལྷ་སྒེ་རག། Indian sash
- bsang mchod* བསང་མཆོད། offering *bsang*
- chab ma* ཆབ་མ། a waistband ornament
- dar khrug ske rag* དར་ཁྲུག་སྒེ་རག། silk sash
- Dga' ldan* དག་འ་ལྷན། \*monastery
- dge bshes* དགེ་བཤེས། high lama
- Dge lugs pa* དགེ་ལུགས་པ། \*sect
- Dkar mdzes* དཀར་མཛེས། \*place
- dud 'gro* དུད་འགྲོ། animals
- dung 'khor* དུང་འཁོར། big scripture wheel house
- go rtse* གོ་རྩེ། \*kind of bread
- gos 'cham* གོས་འཆམ། dancing without masks
- gro ma* གྲོ་མ། wild yams
- Gser rta* གསེར་རྟ། \*place
- gtor ma* གཏོར་མ། dough effigy
- Gtsang bo* གཙང་བོ། \*a river
- gzhi bdag* གཞི་བདག། mountain god
- hen bsdu* ཧེན་བསྐྱ། collect and gather
- kha btags* ཁ་བཏགས། white silk scarf
- kha zas* ཁ་ཟས། \*kind of bread
- Khams* ཁམས། \*place
- khams byang* ཁམས་བྱང་། northern Khams
- lab rtse* ལ་རྩེ། mountain deity altar
- Lo sar* ལོ་སར། New Year
- mchod pa* མཆོད་པ། offerings
- mu* 亩 0.666 hectares

*nya mchod dus chen* ཉ་མཚན་དུས་ཆེན། auspicious days  
*Nyag rong* ཉག་རོང་། \*place  
*pang khebs* པང་ཁེབས། apron  
*Phrug* ཕུག། felt  
*phye phul* ཕྱེ་ཕུལ། *rtsam pa* mixed with butter, cheese and sugar  
*rgya gar phu med* རྒྱ་གར་ཕུ་མེད། Indian sleeveless robes  
*rlung rta* རླང་རྟ། wind horse  
*rngul len* རྩལ་ལེན། shirt  
*sder kha sgrig spyad* སེར་ཁ་སྒྲིག་སྤྱད། things placed in plates  
*sdom pa* སྡོམ་པ། fasting  
*Se ra* སེ་ར། \*monastery  
*seng ge 'o ma* སེང་གེ་འོ་མ། lion's milk  
*Sichuan* སུའུ་ཁུ། \*place  
*smon lam* སྐོན་ལམ། chant and pray  
*smyung gnas* སྤྱུང་གནས། fasting  
*sprel zla* སྤེལ་ཟླ། monkey month  
*Stong skor* སྟོང་སྐོར། gather to an empty place  
*Stong skor ba* སྟོང་སྐོར་བ། Stong skor people  
*thug pa* ཐུག་པ། noodles  
*tsha ru* ཐ་རུ། lamb skin  
*Yi dwags* ཡི་དྲགས། hungry ghosts  
*zhabs drung* རྩབས་བྱུང་། maser  
*Zur thog mda'* ལུར་ཐོག་མདའ། \*place

WRITE NEW VOCABULARY HERE

WRITE YOUR EVALUATION HERE

## VOCABULARY

Ask these questions to a partner.

1. Are blackouts common in your hometown? What do people do when there is a blackout?
2. Is it acceptable to make new year visits empty-handed?
3. Who is the family head in your household? Who is the senior woman?
4. Who are your immediate family members?
5. Do you think you have good job prospects after graduation?
6. What are the points of interest for visitors to your hometown?
7. What things do people keep in their robe pouch?
8. If you travelled from here to Lhasa, where would you travel via?
9. What can people do to generate compassion?
10. What should we do to address the problem of pollution?

## STRUCTURE

Underline the phrases that begin with *if*. The first has been done for you.

If there is a seriously sick or dying person in a family, a high lama, usually a *dge shes* from the monastery is invited.

If the house is in an open, flat place, a courtyard is built.

If they went, they rode yaks and horses or walked.

Guests sleep in the living room if they spend the night in the home.

If there is garbage on the floor, it is not swept away with a broom during Lo sar.

If the bride goes to live in the groom's home, the wedding is held in the last ten days of a month.

If the groom goes to live in the bride's home, the wedding should be held during the first ten days of a month.

*Complete the sentences below.*

If villagers have free time, they...

People invite monks to chant if ...

If ... they don't tell anybody.



If ... people are happy.

If they see a bucket full of water...

If ... villagers will scold him.

If ...the family will be unlucky.

If ... they don't celebrate Lo sar.

If it is a *nya mchod dus chen* ...

### EXERCISES

Do these exercises, then check your answers in the text.

*from of as to before for after on*

Village males drink alcohol and this is seen \_\_\_\_\_ a major social problem. High lamas have recently begun \_\_\_\_\_ mention the negative effects \_\_\_\_\_ drinking alcohol more often and, consequently, many males have taken group oaths \_\_\_\_\_ high lamas \_\_\_\_\_ stop drinking. Some do this for self-imposed reasons, others because \_\_\_\_\_ other reasons and pressure \_\_\_\_\_ family members. The period \_\_\_\_\_ abstinence varies. Some want \_\_\_\_\_ abstain \_\_\_\_\_ a year, others \_\_\_\_\_ five years, and some \_\_\_\_\_ their whole life. Many begin abstaining \_\_\_\_\_ drink \_\_\_\_\_ the first day \_\_\_\_\_ Lo sar, and others begin \_\_\_\_\_ the fifth day \_\_\_\_\_ Lo sar, \_\_\_\_\_ enjoying some parties and visits. There are also many people, male and female, who take oaths \_\_\_\_\_ abstain from eating meat \_\_\_\_\_ any *nya mchod dus chen*.

*supreme regular useful uncertain risky government  
attractive good*

Graduating from school does not necessarily improve job prospects, and it is considered \_\_\_\_\_ to spend time and money on an \_\_\_\_\_ investment. The \_\_\_\_\_ goal of attending school is to get a \_\_\_\_\_ job and receive \_\_\_\_\_ wages. Not only is the salary \_\_\_\_\_, but such jobs can raise a family's status. On the other hand, people worry that, by investing in education, their child might become neither \_\_\_\_\_ at studying nor \_\_\_\_\_ as a laborer.

*Can you guess the verbs?*

The dance is \_\_\_\_\_ on these two days to \_\_\_\_\_ all harm and inauspiciousness from the old year and prevent evil in the coming New Year. A *gtor ma* is \_\_\_\_\_ ed red and nailed on a board, during these two days. Monks \_\_\_\_\_ around the *gtor ma* while other monks sitting high above them \_\_\_\_\_. At the end of the two days, the *gtor ma* is \_\_\_\_\_ into several pieces and all the monks form a long procession, carrying the *gtor ma*. Men \_\_\_\_\_ with rifles. The dismembered *gtor ma* is taken to a mountain cliff and \_\_\_\_\_ ed, accompanied by gunshots, after high lamas chant for about ten minutes. People \_\_\_\_\_ to watch the whole dance, especially elders.

The village (holds/hold) dances in the public house on the sixth and seventh days. The dancers (practices/practice) their dances for ten to fifteen days before Lo sar. Dancers are (select/selected) from each household, and are usually under thirty except in families which have a family member who is seriously sick or recently deceased. Traditional circle dances and modern Tibetan dances are (performed/perform). They (performed/perform) the whole morning and (had/have) more dances after lunch. The circle dance is (performed/perform) in the morning with dancers (sing/singing) traditional dancing songs while (dance/dancing). Modern Tibetan dancing shows are (performed/perform) after the circle dancing in the afternoon, with a CD player and loud speakers. Before about 1992, villagers (dance/danced) to a flute played by a villager, but after tape players became common in the village people began (used/using/use) them instead of traditional instruments. After these dances are (hold/held), there are no other specific activities until the fourteenth day

## CONTENT

1. Where is Zur thog mda'? What is the origin of the village?
2. How have village livelihoods changed recently?
3. Talk about Stong khor Monastery and the Stong khor zhabs drung.
4. What are the two types of fasting that villagers do and how are these different?
5. What are local people's attitudes towards education? Is this the same in your hometown?
6. Compared to your hometown, how is the transportation and electricity in Zur thog mda'?
7. What is special about local clothes?
8. What interesting or unique things occur in the new year festivities in Zur thog mda'?
9. What does A ce mkha' 'gro ma's account describe? Is this situation familiar to you?
10. Do people in your hometown take oaths during Lo sar or at other times?
11. What do the pictures at the end show? What other pictures would you like to see of this village?
12. What is the most interesting part of this text?

# A KHAMS PA NEW YEAR IN VILLAGE AND CITY

Tshe ring chos 'tsho

## PART ONE: VILLAGE LIFE

### I. SENG ZE VILLAGE'S LOCATION

Seng ze Village is located in Skye dgu Township (Yul shul County, Yul shul Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province), five kilometers from Skye dgu Town, the capital of Yul shul. The village is situated in a wide valley, between two mountains, both of which are regarded as holy by local Tibetans. The mountain behind the village is called Shug ba dbyangs phyug, 'the mountain covered by *shug ba* (cypress)'. This was true in the past; the cypress was so thick and tall that one could not see an antelope walking on the mountain. But beginning in 1958, the cypress was cut down and uprooted. After two or three years, not a single cypress was left. The other holy mountain is Seng ze thid. *Thid* means front. People named the mountain Seng ze thid because it is in front of Seng ze Village. It is an important mountain for the village. The south side of the mountain consists of white rock which is regarded as sacred. In addition to being sacred, this white rock also provides villagers with an income, as explained later. Behind the mountain is Rigs gsum mgon po, the abode of the lords of the three families: Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri, and Phyang na rdo rje. In front of this mountain is the Rdza chu River. Ten years ago people drank directly from this river, but now it is polluted with household sewage and garbage.

Looking down on the village from either mountain, one sees that most of the village is occupied by companies. In the upper village, there is a large vegetable field, and next to it is an abandoned rug factory and a road construction company. Not far from there is an institute of agricultural science and the village school. About six households are scattered in the upper village. In the middle of the village is Rgya nag ma Ni, a wall of white mani stones. Beside it is the prefecture abattoir. The lower village is scattered with households and ends with another vegetable field. The distance between the upper village and lower village is about three kilometers.

## II. POPULATION

The total population of Seng ze Village is approximately 2,200 and is divided into two parts according to location: Stod mgo 'upper village' and Yul smad 'lower village'. A third group was added in 2004 as more and more migrants arrived. This group is called Shui hu. Shui hu is the name of a book about a group of heroes who gather together. This group is named Shui hu because they came from such different places as 'Ba 'thang and Ra shul Township, of Yul shul County, and such other counties as Nang chin, Rdza stod, 'Bri stod, and Chu dmar leb.

## III. LANGUAGE

Seng ze people speak the Khams dialect. Not necessarily all Khams dialect speakers speak in same way. For example Yul shul and Dkar mdzes pronunciations are different. Different counties in Yul shul Prefecture can also be divided into sub-dialects. Nang chen and Rdza stod dialects are quite similar. 'Bri stod and Chu dmar leb constitute one dialect, as do Khri 'du and Yul shul dialect. Yul shul county's dialect can also be divided into different sub-dialects, which differ only slightly. Skye dgu and Seng ze people speak Skye dgu dialect. There is a large gap between writing and speaking in Skye dgu dialect. Migrants from Nang chen, Rdza stod, 'Bri stod, Chu dmar leb, Ra shus, and Zu mo Counties, after living in Seng ze for at most one year, can use Skye dgu dialect to communicate with local villagers but speak their own dialect at home.

As more and more new things are introduced into the village, new, non-indigenous words accompany them. The names of non-indigenous vegetables, fruits, and machines are all Chinese.

## IV. RELIGION

Seng ze villagers are all Buddhists, as are the vast majority of Yul shul Tibetans. Seng ze villagers and Skye dgu people follow the Sa skya sect. Skye dgu Monastery is the biggest Sa skya sect monastery in Tibet. When local boys become monks, they are sent

to Skye dgu Monastery. However, Sa skya sect followers can go to other sects' monasteries and worship their lamas.

RGYA NAG MA NI. Rgya nag ma Ni is situated in the middle of the village. It is a wall of mani stones. In January 2005, it was recorded in the Guinness Book of Record in Shanghai, as the largest mani wall in the world. Rgya nag ma Ni's length on the north side is 240 meters. The south side is 247 meters. The width on the west side is sixty-one meters, and the east side is seventy-three meters. In 2005 the highest point was six meters and the lowest was three meters. However, the height increases every year as people add stones to it.

There are three temples associated with the mani. In the main one, all the important property of the Rgya nag ma Ni are displayed. In 2003, it was rebuilt; the previous one leaked when it rained, and wind came through the walls; grass grew on the roof. The Rgya nag ma Ni Management Committee (the village leader selects three managers, which change every year) collected donations from pilgrims to build the temple. The other two temples are smaller than the main one and contain two large '*khor lo* 'prayer wheels'; one of these temples was also recently rebuilt by a lama currently in India. Every year three families known as *lhag rnyen* are selected by lot to open the temples and clean lamps, boil butter, and light butter lamps. Pilgrims buy butter lamps for one RMB each. Before 2007, the duty of being *lhag rnyen* was unpaid however, now each family receives five percent of the temple's income from butter lamps. Twelve statues are placed throughout the mani, and 490 small *khor lo* surround it. The following is a brief introduction of the mani's history.

Rgya nag ma Ni was founded by the first reincarnation of Rgya nag stobs ldan byang chub 'phags dbang in 1715. Rgya nag means China or Chinese, and Stobs ldan means full of power. This name is related to his background. He was born in Cha mdo (in the present day Tibetan Autonomous Region) on an unknown date. He became a monk while young and studied Buddhism with a high lama in Gong 'jo in western Khams. After that, he traveled to many places, including India, and meditated at many holy sites for many years. During his travels and meditation he consistently had visions of Tara telling him to go to Dga' (Yul shul and Khri 'du), where he

could help more people, and so he decided to go to Dga'. He came through Dar rtse mdo, now known as Kangding. Near that area he was retained as a lama by the local lord. The lord was ethnically Qiang,<sup>124</sup> but Yul shul people call Qiang people Rgya, meaning Chinese. Because of this, people call him Rgya nag sprul sku 'Chinese reincarnation'. Eventually he escaped from the lord, inspired by his dream of Tara.

When he came to a monastery named Rdzogs chen,<sup>125</sup> the temple had burned down. There he rested, leaning on a ruined wall. Suddenly the earth in front of him shook, and a copper statue emerged, saying, "Don't leave me, take me with you." He took it with him. He continued his journey, displaying his powers time and time again. His name became widespread.

When he arrived at a monastery in Khri 'du, he was invited to stay, because locals had already heard of him and his power. "What do you need, what can we offer for you?" they asked. "That *thang ga*,"<sup>126</sup> he replied, pointing to one of the *thang ga* hung inside on the temple wall. "But it is our most important possession, you can't take it," they said. "He's the one, I'm going with him," said the *thang ga*. So he took the *thang ga* with him.

When he came to Seng ze, he recognized it as a holy place. There he founded the Rgya nag ma Ni, with the help of villagers. They brought some white stones from Seng ze thid on yaks' backs. On the stones, they carved Om mani padme hum. The first foundation was about one meter wide and two meters long. The Rgya nag sprul sku predicted that the Rgya nag ma Ni would grow bigger, and soon it would be so high that from one side one would be unable to see a man on a horse raising a spear above his head. Young men from Seng ze Village laughed at the lama, leaping over the stones saying, "See! We even can jump over it. How can it become high enough to hide a horseman with a spear?" Ignoring the men's taunts, he built a small temple beside the mani, putting the copper statue and the *thang ga* inside.

Eventually his prediction came true; the ma Ni pile became

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<sup>124</sup> Qiang, an ethnic group in China.

<sup>125</sup> It is unclear where this was exactly, but it was not the present Rdzogs chen Monastery in Sde dge county, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province.

<sup>126</sup> *Thang ga* refers to a scroll painting mounted on colorful satins and fabrics.

enormous. It even became one of the villagers' primary sources of income. Though people farmed and herded, carving mani was their main means of subsistence. Most families had a very small number of yaks, only enough to provide for their own family. Pilgrims from other places, especially nomads, exchanged their yaks, sheep, fur, cheese, and butter for mani stones.

The Rgya nag ma Ni continued growing for two and a half centuries. However in 1966, during the Culture Revolution, it was destroyed; the temple was pulled down, and not a single mani stone was left in place. Mani stones were transported to Skye dgu and used as bricks to build government offices, Skye dgu theatre (now destroyed), the prefecture jail, toilets, and much other public infrastructure, including roads. On the original location of Rgya nag ma Ni, Yul shul prefecture's abattoir (where around five thousand yaks and sheep are now killed annually) was built using white mani stones.

In 1981, after Deng Xiao Ping's reforms, the Rgya nag ma Ni was rebuilt as before by villagers and pilgrims. Moreover, the government has rebuilt public buildings using cement bricks, so most of the mani stones previously used for construction have been returned to Seng ze. In addition, the boss of the abattoir became ill, the factory's business lagged, and a large amount of abattoir land was sold and divided among the workers. Because of this, stones previously used as the abattoir foundation, floors, and walls, were returned to the Rgya nag ma Ni.

Many pilgrims now come to circumambulate the mani pile. The majority are older people above fifty who no longer need to do housework. People above eighty hold walking sticks and walk extremely slowly; when they sit they cannot rise without assistance. They circumambulate the mani once in the time it takes adults to circumambulate three or four times. Some pilgrims have recently deceased family members. After one dies, forty-nine days are needed to practice rituals that guide the dead through *Bar do*, so during the forty-nine days the relatives of the dead person circumambulate the mani.

Seng ze villagers and Skye dgu people mostly circumambulate in the morning and evening. By four a.m. there are already people circumambulating. Skye dgu people drive cars or arrive by taxi, and are usually there by about five thirty. By eight a.m., most people this age have gone to work. In the evening, there



are adults and elders, along with a new group: people aged sixteen to twenty-three. Of these, some date, while others look for partners. Only a few come for purely religious purposes.

On such auspicious days as the eighth, fourteenth, fifteenth, and thirtieth of each lunar month a greater than usual amount of people come to circumambulate and worship. At these times it takes a half an hour to circumambulate the mani while normally it takes only about six minutes. People coming to the mani mostly come from such places as the six counties in Yul shul Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (Yul shul, Nang chen, Rdza stod, 'Bri stod, Khri 'du, and Chu mar leb), Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Rnga ba Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (both in Sichuan Province), and Mgo log Tibetan Autonomous prefecture in Qinghai Province.

**IMPORTANT RITUALS.** During the following rituals, more people than usual come to circumambulate the mani.

Rgya nag 'bum chen is held from the first day of Lo sar until the fifteenth. 'Bum chen literally means '100,000 big' indicating that the effect of anything one does for good, will be much amplified on this day. For example, if you save one life, the result equals saving many lives. If you circumambulate the mani once, it is the equivalent to circumambulating it many times. The first to the fifteenth of the first lunar month is known as Chos 'phrul ston pa'i dus chen, the period when the Buddha used his powers to convince *mu stegs ston pa drug* 'six devils' to surrender to Buddhism.

The Buddha was born on the seventh of the fourth lunar month, and enlightened on the fifteenth of the fourth lunar month. Due to this, the whole fourth lunar month is regarded as a special and fruitful month. This means a greater than usual amount of people come to the mani to circumambulate and amplify the action outcome of their good act.

Lha 'bab dus chen falls on the twenty-second of the tenth lunar month and commemorates the time when the Buddha came down from sky. On this day more pilgrims come to circumambulate the mani.

Sa skya smon lam was started in 2003 and is held from the tenth to the fifteenth of the eleventh lunar month. Started by Skye

dgu Monastery, the festival is held annually. During the Smon lam, around 3,000 monks from Skye dgu Monastery and nearby monasteries gather at Rgya nag ma Ni. Several highly respected lamas are invited to give speeches about correct behavior.

Rgya nag 'bum chung is held from the first day of twelfth lunar month to the fifteenth. 'Bum chung, literally means '100,000 small'. It is similar to Rgya nag 'Bum chen, indicating the effects of actions will be amplified on those days.

## V. INCOME

After the policy of *tuigeng huanlin*, 'return farmlands to forest' was instituted in 2003, villagers were encouraged with a gift of 400kg of flour to return fields to the government to be converted to grassland and forest. After three years, the government stopped providing flour. Now only a small number of families keep fields. When people need barley, they buy it from relatives from nearby villages or from Skye dgu Town.

Now, villagers' main source of income is carving mani stones. The process of carving stones is as follows: on the right side of the front mountain, three kilometers from the village, are white quartz deposits. This is shared by the whole village and no particular person or group of people owns it. People put explosive charges on top of the mountain, detonate them, and collect the rubble. In 2006, a road was built so that trucks could go to the foot of the mountain and load stones. Prior to this, it was very difficult to drive there; most villagers carried stones on their backs in baskets. Before the use of explosives, introduced in the 1980s, villagers used hammers to break rocks.

After transporting the rocks home, large rocks are broken up with hammers. Mantras are carved on the flattest surface using a hammer and chisel. Recently, people have begun using machines to carve huge mani stones. The most common stone is the size of two adult fists. The six syllable mantra Om mani padme hum is usually carved on these stones, which are the cheapest, costing one RMB (though in 2008, due to inflation, the price of stones increased to two RMB). Other common stones are *tha mdo*, *kha brgya*, *rdo drug 'bru drug* 'six stones six words', *tshe bzung* 'long life', *tshe nin*, (aM ma raNI dZl wAN+di ye swA hA, an

abbreviation of *tshe bzung*), *yig brgya* (a hundred words, used to lessen or eradicate sin in general), *lu mdo* (to eradicate the sin caused by killing cats), *khyu mdo* (to eradicate the sin caused by killing dogs), *sbrul mdo* (to eradicate sin caused by killing snakes), and *stung bshags* (to lessen or eradicate sin). Prices vary, depending on stones' sizes, the amount of scripture on them, and the work and time spent to make them. *Rdo drug 'bug drug* is the most expensive. The six syllable mantra is carved separately on six stones. The bigger the stones, the higher the price. Now, the biggest must be loaded on a truck and cost 8,000 RMB in total.

Some villagers find it inconvenient to transport stones from the mountain and prefer to buy stones from others. Therefore, a few families support themselves by gathering, transporting, and selling stones. A truck-load of stone cost about 120 RMB in 2008. On average, a family can presently earn about 15,000 RMB in a year by carving mani stones.

## VI. HOUSING

Houses are distributed east to west along the valley, between Shug ba yul sug and the Rdza chu and Seng ze thid. More are on the north side of the road, where there is more space. About a quarter of the families live on the south side with the Rdza chu River flowing beside them.

Most of the houses are one story, flat-roofed, and made of stone and adobe. Wood transported from other areas is used for the roof beams and pillars. Newly built houses are made of cement, including the roof. The outside front walls and floors are tiled. Instead of traditional wooden framed windows, people now use aluminum window frames. Traditionally the courtyard gate was also wooden, but now villagers use iron doors.

A kitchen, *ra gses*, shrine room, store room, covered pen for yaks, yak dung room, and a shed are the basic spaces for a family. The kitchen is not equivalent to a modern kitchen. People not only use it for cooking, but also as a living room and bedroom. In the kitchen there is a shelf, a stove, one or two wooden beds, and tables. The yak dung room is beside the kitchen, and has a 1.5 square meter hole facing the kitchen. The *ra gses* also is used as a living room and bedroom. Important guests are invited to the *ra*

gses to eat and to sleep. Barley, *rtsam pa*, flour, rice, butter, and meat are all stored in the store room. The shed is where people store stones and carve ma Ni.

This describes a traditional structure in which families with older houses still live. Newly built houses are also like this, except there is a storage shed instead of a yak dung room. There is also a porch and one or more extra bedrooms.

The size of houses vary. Every family has their own courtyard. No matter how poor a family is, a home must have a kitchen, shrine room, and store room.

In the shrine room, statues or pictures of Buddha Sakyamuni and important lamas are displayed. Other common images are Green Tara, White Tara, Guru Rinpoche, and Dpal ldan lha mo. Richer families have more statues than pictures. In front of the images are bowls of rice, barley, and water. The water is changed every morning. A butter lamp and sticks of incense are lit daily in the morning. In the evening, the water is poured out and the bowls are cleaned. On the eighth, fourteenth, fifteenth, and twenty-ninth of each lunar month, as well as the first day of Lo sar, a larger than usual number of butter lamps (three to five) are lit. The barley and rice are changed once a year on the day before Lo sar.

## VII. CLOTHING

The basic style of dress is a Tibetan traditional robe, which can be divided into winter and summer dress, ordinary and ceremonial dresses, and men and women's dress.

Women's winter ceremonial dress is *tsha ru sram bskor* (*tsha ru* means 'lamb skin' and *sram bskor* indicates that the *tsha ru* robe is edged with *sram*, otter skin). An otter skin strip is about thirty centimeters wide. On the back of the robe, a decorative picture such as a *g.yung drung* 'swastika' is pieced together from white otter skin strips in the center. Along the otter strip, a piece of narrow colored silk is rimmed and sewed with gold and silver threads. While the outside of the robe is made of *ther ma*, or *rgyan shan* 'silk', the lining is made from high-quality lamb skin chosen in the spring.

Women wear their hair in many thin braids with an amber

ornament on the top, red coral, one ribbon, and a turquoise inlaid on a string of red cloth cushion on their heads. *Mdo rna*, agate eardrops inlaid with gold, are ceremonial earrings. The center of a woman's necklace is often inlaid with a *gzi* 'tiger's eye' with two groups of red coral beads inlaid on both sides. Richer people wear several necklaces like this in order to display their wealth.

Waistbands include *chab khra* and *sgyid sgrog*. *Chab khra* is one inch wider than *sgyid sgrog* and is worn on the waist. Under *chab khra*, a silk fabric ribbon is used to tighten the robe. *Sgrog sgrog* is tied on the buttocks, and shows a woman's figure. It is made of golden boards carved with decorative patterns and inlaid with coral beads and turquoises. On *chab khra*, *glo gru*, *kha shubs* 'a needle box', *glo lung* (a decorative silver plate), and *sul sul* (a string of small silver bells) are hung.

Women's summer dress are *rgyan shan*, *sram gos*, and *phrug*. *Rgyan shan* is made from black pulu or woolen cloth rimmed with colored silk. *Sram gos* is the same as *tsha ru sram bskor*, but without *tsha ru* inside. *Phrug* 'felt' refers to robes made with pulu. Other decorations are the same as in winter.

Men's winter ceremonial dress is simpler than women's. It differs from women's *tsha ru sram bskor* in that the otter skin is only one inch wide and both sleeves are also trimmed with leopard or tiger's skin. The necklace for men is *g.yu dgag*, a *gzi*, and two rubies on both sides.

Men's summer dress is *sram bskor*, *phrug*, and *ther ma*<sup>127</sup> robe. Both men and women wear Tibetan boots. The situation described above changed in 2006, when an important Buddhist teaching was given stating that Tibetans should not wear animal skin trimmed robes. After that, people ceased wearing skin trimmed robes.

Ordinary dress is *rgya ma* 'Tibetan cloth robe' in summer and *tsha ru* in winter. People wear a *rgya ma* over the *tsha ru* as it is easier to wash if stained. Nowadays, fewer and fewer people wear Tibetan robes, donning them only during rituals, ceremonies, feasts, weddings or Lo sar. Now, only uneducated women aged above forty habitually wear Tibetan robes, but they may wear modern shoes instead of Tibetan boots. Men, children, students, and young people wear western style clothes.

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<sup>127</sup> *Ther ma* a type of cloth partly made of wool.

## VIII. FOOD

*Rtsam pa* is the staple food of Seng ze villagers and is eaten in three ways: *zan*, *pho zha*, and *this bu*. To make *zan*, *rtsam pa* is poured into a bowl of tea with butter and *chur ba* 'cheese'. This is mixed with the right hand. To make *pho zha*, *rtsam pa* is mixed with *chur ba* and pasted in the bottom of the bowl with a piece of butter. Finally, tea is poured and a finger is used to eat the *rtsam pa*; the tea is drunk. *This bu* differs in that it lacks tea. It is *rtsam pa* mixed with butter and *chur ba*. People eat it with a cup of tea. *Rtsam pa* also is eaten with *gro ma* 'yam', and melted butter.

Seng ze villagers eat raw, cooked, and dry meat. Every winter, people butcher livestock or buy such meat as mutton and yak meat, but mostly yak meat. They cut meat into strips about three fingers wide, and half a forearm in length, and may season it with salt or 'dzum 'wild garlic', but mostly use no seasoning. Meat is then put into ball-shaped wicker baskets, which are hung under eaves or put on the roof or on top of the shed. In this way, meat can be stored until next autumn without spoiling.

*Thud* is a cake made from the best *chur ba* mixed with fresh melted butter and sugar. This mixture is molded into a ball by hand or set in a bowl.

Villagers may eat thick and oily yoghurt with sugar, or boiled *gro ma*, but mostly eat it plain. Only a few people eat it with chopsticks and spoons.

'Bras 'rice' is eaten as *sha 'bras*, '*bras*, and *bu 'bras*. *Sha 'bras* is rice porridge with meat and salt. '*Bras* is rice porridge with milk, and sometimes sugar. *Bu 'bras* is steamed rice mixed with sugar. These are not eaten often, only when people have the inclination.

Uses of flour can be divided into three kinds. One is *thug ba*, noodle soup. Another is fried dough twist, called *glo gcu*. The last one is bread, called *bag leb*.

Locally there are two kinds of *rgyu ma* 'sausage'. Lamb intestines filled with sheep's blood are called *khrag rgyu* 'blood sausage'. Sausages filled with yak meat or mutton are called *sha rgyu* 'meat sausage'.

Potatoes are grown locally. People eat it in two forms. It may be boiled with meat or by itself. The other way potato is eaten is as a Chinese dish, stir-fried with salt as seasoning.

Staple foods are *rtsam pa*, meat, yoghurt, rice, flour, and Chinese dishes such as, potato, cabbage, vermicelli, and egg. In the morning people eat *rtsam pa* or bread, while for lunch they eat Chinese dishes and rice or bread, yoghurt, and meat. Between lunch and dinner, at around five or six o' clock, villagers eat a meal called *dgung ja*. This is usually *rtsam pa*, bread, or left-overs from lunch. For dinner, noodle soup is eaten, and after dinner people eat one or two bowls of yoghurt, which is thought to aid sleep.

Mostly *gro ma ma khu*,<sup>128</sup> *thud*, *gro gcu*, and *rgyu ma* are prepared on such special occasions as rituals, ceremonies, horse races, and Lo sar.

## IX. WATER

Villagers have three sources of water: public running water, private wells, and the Rdza chu River. The river was used by most families before it became polluted. At the same time, villagers' incomes have increased, and so families far from the river can afford to dig their own wells. Even families near the river now have wells too. Public running water is situated in front of Rgya nag ma Ni and is used mostly by adjacent families. The abattoir built this facility for Seng ze Village. Since 2003, many wells have dried up, so people must go to the public tap to fetch water.

## X. TRANSPORTATION

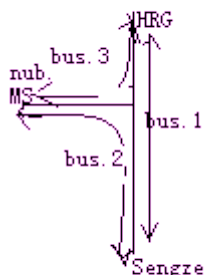
In 1993, a dirt road running through the village was paved with asphalt. To go to Xining or Chengdu from Yul shul one must go through Seng ze Village. In 2006, the road was rebuilt and named the 214 National Highway. A section of the road, about one kilometer between Rgya nag ma Ni and the upper village, was not rebuilt; instead, a new section along the Rdza chu was built.

In the 1980s, before the use of trucks, horse drawn carriages, yaks, and horses were used to transport goods to and from Skye dgu. Later, when people went to Skye dgu, they either had to wait for trucks or walk on foot. In 2003, local bus routes

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<sup>128</sup> *Gro ma ma khu* is a mixture of *tsam pa*, butter, and boiled *gro ma*.

were established in Skye dgu and included Seng ze (see below). There are three routes (numbers one, two, and three). The number one bus goes between Horse Racing Grassland and Seng ze. The number two bus goes between Number One Middle School and Seng ze. The number three route goes between Horse Racing Grassland and the Number One Middle school. People only need to wait five minutes and pay one RMB to ride the bus.



Local bus routes.

## XI. ELECTRICITY AND COMMUNICATION

Electricity was connected to Seng ze in 1980 with the building of a hydroelectric plant in Skye dgu. The power is constantly off in winter because the water freezes. There is sufficient power for approximately 500 households at once, so electricity is provided to different communities in turn; each gets two or three days' power, and then needs to wait for around two weeks. At first, power was only used for light, because people could not buy other appliances, due to inconvenient transportation limiting imports and to villagers' low cash incomes. When roads to Chengdu and Xining were built, commodities were imported. At the same time, villagers' cash incomes increased, and they could afford to buy TVs, VCDs, and refrigerators. Average village families now have TVs and refrigerators.



## XII. EDUCATION

In 1980, Seng ze Village Primary School was built and in 2003 a junior middle school was established. In 2008, the school had thirty teachers and 715 students; 423 primary students and 292 junior students. Almost one third of the students are from nearby villages; the rest are Seng ze Village children. After middle school in Seng ze, students continue high school in Skye dgu. Before the spread of the nine-year compulsory education policy, which was enacted in 2006, not all school-age children attended school; people considered it a waste of time and money which did not lead to employment. Common students without family background or social networks rarely found employment after graduation. Only outstanding students and students with kin and social connections got jobs. After the nine-year compulsory education policy, all school-aged children are forced to attend school. This has increased enrollment rates at the primary and junior-high levels, but enrollment rates dropped in senior-high school. The percentage of students going on to tertiary education is much lower. In 2008, three villagers had master's degrees, fifteen were undergraduates in bachelor programs, and about thirty had *dazhuan* 'junior college' degrees.

### PAR TWO: LO SAR

#### I. PREPARATIONS FOR LO SAR

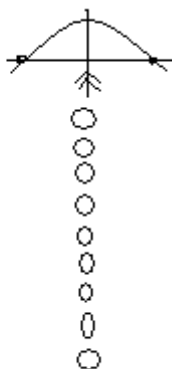
In Seng ze Village, some families start to prepare for Lo sar as early as the sixteenth day of the twelfth lunar month, but most begin preparation on the twentieth. Lo sar preparations primarily include house cleaning, washing, shopping, bread preparation, *thud* preparation, hanging prayer flags, making *tshe mar*, displaying dishes, and fetching *skar chu*.

SHOPPING. Villagers go to Skye dgu frequently to buy food and beverages. Foods include such manufactured snacks as candies, biscuits, raisins, and dates. Fruits and vegetables purchased include apples, oranges, bananas, peaches, cabbages, eggplants, cauliflowers, and cucumbers. Eggs are also purchased. Beverages

include Pepsi, Coco Cola, Sprite, and Jian Li Bao, a domestic carbonated drink. Many families buy snacks and firecrackers in the open market, located in Yak Square (locally called Guanchang), because they can be bought cheaply there. There are around seventy stalls run by Yul shul Tibetans who also have permanent shops in town; they set up stalls just for Lo sar. Foldable steel beds are used to display goods, as are truck trailer beds. The market is controlled by the local *gong shang ju* 'Industrial and Commerce Bureau.' Some families buy snacks in Skye dgu monastery's shop, partly because they want to do something good for the monastery, but also because they believe the quality is better. Vegetables and fruit are bought from Chinese vegetable shops.

Western style clothes wearers buy new clothes for New Year. It takes a couple of days to buy new clothes. After choosing clothes they like, people need to bargain until they get an acceptable price. Therefore, it's hard to get all the necessary clothes in one day.

HOUSE CLEANING. House cleaning includes *du rgyan phyags pa* 'cleaning chimneys', wiping away spider-webs, dusting rugs, and cleaning pots, windows, and the yard. *Dud rgan phyags pa* and wiping away spider-webs are done on the twenty-third, twenty-fifth, twenty-seventh, and twenty-ninth days of the twelfth lunar month. It is unnecessary to finish in a single day; it may take up to four days. Others cleaning can be done any time before Lo sar. To clean out chimneys, the chimneys must first be hit with a stick to knock out all the soot into a dustpan. The kitchen chimney, which is used most, needs the most attention. Others in bed rooms, *ra gses*, and the shrine are only symbolically knocked with the stick. Then, soot is used to draw a picture of a bow and an arrow in front of each house with nine spots of dust (see diagram below).



This signifies that all the old dust and accumulated filth of the year has been thrown beyond the highest heaven. This drawing is done before dawn.

Wiping away spider-webs is usually done at the same time as *dud rgan phyags pa*. People use a branch from a bush called '*ba ga*' to wipe away spider-webs hanging from the ceilings of all rooms. '*Ba ga*' is collected on mountains. It has solid branches, with no flowers or leaves. After being used for cleaning, the '*ba ga*' is thrown away.

Dusting rugs can be done at anytime. People hang bed-rugs and sofa-rugs on a clothes line, and use *shus ded*, a wooden cane a little thicker than a finger, to beat the rugs.

There are two types of pots, copper and aluminum, which must be cleaned. Copper pots are now only used for decoration and aluminum pots are used in daily life. People use a steel scourer, sand, and ash from burning yak dung, or scraps of yak dung to clean pots.

Cleaning windows and the yard is easier and does not take much time. Both can be finished in one day for most families, but families with sunrooms have more glass to clean and, therefore, may take more than one day to finish.

**WASHING.** On a sunny day, people wash quilt covers, sheets, pillowcases, and unwashed clothes that might be worn during Lo sar. Families with washing machines can wash quickly, finishing in one day, but the majority of people do not have washing machines. They hand wash in a big aluminum or plastic basin. Washing by hand may take two or three days, depending on how

much needs to be washed.

**WASHING AND CUTTING HAIR.** Hair is washed or cut on the twenty-sixth day. All women and girls traditionally wore their hair in many thin braids. In the past, women washed their hair with soda and washing powder, introduced to the area around 1980, and then braided their hair with the assistance of some well-known braiders who were naturally good at braiding. However, now people wash their hair with shampoo more frequently than before (at least once or twice a week) and not many women braid their hair in the traditional style. Old women, above the age of fifty, wear their hair in two braids behind the ears. Others wear one braided plait down their back. Most female students, especially university students, have shorter hair, which they bind at the back in a ponytail or bun.

Men and boys wash their hair and symbolically cut a little. Monks and nuns shave their hair on this day. In the past, cutting and shaving were done by family members at home, using scissors or a knife, but now many people prefer to go to barber shops.

**BREAD PREPARATION.** There is no specific date for making bread, but families usually make it on the twenty-seventh or twenty-eighth. They can finish making bread in a single day. A family needs to prepare Lo sar bread for themselves, related monks and nuns, and for beggars. There are two kinds of fried bread, one is *gro gcu* 'twisted bread', and one is *gro khar* 'colorful bread'. Both breads are made either in the kitchen or in a shed, because the kitchen becomes too smoky. The day before making bread, the dough is placed in a basin, wrapped in a quilt, and put in the kitchen beside the stove to ferment.

The next day, at least two people (usually women) are needed to make *gro gcu*; one flattens the fermented dough on a big cutting board and slices it into many pieces, four fingers in width and fifteen centimeters long. Then each slice is folded from the middle and cut a few times across the center. One side is pulled through the middle cut.

Meanwhile, the other person boils a pot of rapeseed oil and puts the prepared slices into the pot. A normal pot can contain five

slices at once. This person needs to turn over the slices in the pot. After both sides of the bread become golden-brown, it is scooped up and put into a clean empty cardboard box. This person also keeps adding yak dung or chopped wood to the fire.

*Gro khar* is made differently. To make *gro khar*, white dough and brown dough are needed. To make brown dough, black tea and brown sugar are mixed with flour. Both white and brown dough are flattened and put on top of each other, sliced into pieces, put into the heated oil pot, and stirred until cooked. A selection of all types of bread are put on a plate and offered in the shrine room.

Recently, some families who do not have time or who think making bread at home is troublesome buy *gro gcu* and *gro khar* in Skye dgu.

CYPRESS PREPARATION. Most families buy cypress from cypress sellers, because no cypress grows on Seng ze Village's mountains. These sellers are from nearby villages where cypress grows. A bundle of cypress weighing about ten kilograms costs thirty RMB. Usually a family needs two bundles. Some families can get cypress branches from relatives in nearby villages and therefore do not need to purchase it.

THUD PREPARATION. *Thud* is also prepared before Lo sar, though there is no specific date for making it. It can be done in a day.

HANGING PRAYER FLAGS. Prayer flags can be bought either in Skye dgu, or Seng ze. There are vendors selling prayer flags at the Rgya nag ma Ni because pilgrims hang prayer flags on the pile. In Seng ze Village all families hang prayer flags in front of their gates on the twenty-ninth and thirtieth of the twelfth lunar month. It costs around fifteen RMB for a string of flags.

TSHE MAR. *Tshe mar* is made on the thirtieth. It is a plate of *rtsam pa* piled up into a pyramid, on top of which butter shaped into a crescent moon is placed. Above this is a round ball of butter,

symbolizing the sun. Anyone can make it, but monks make it more exquisitely. It is put on an offering table in the shrine for the first day of Lo sar, and is taken away after a month.

DISPLAYING DISHES. On the night of the thirtieth after snacks, breads, and fruits are placed in dishes, full bottles of beverages are displayed on kitchen tables, *ra gsas's* tables, and in the shrine room. Displaying of dishes is usually done by women. Dishes are filled with various candies, dates, biscuits, and raisins.

FETCHING WATER. On the first day of Lo sar, while the stars are still glittering in the sky, girls rush to fetch the morning star water, *skar chu*. They put down their wooden buckets on which are pasted three pieces of burning incense. Then they set fire to twigs of pine and cypress. Pre-dawn water is considered the most pure and auspicious water; it can be used to offer to gods, clean one's own body, wash away dirt and bad luck, get rid of sorrows and worries, and bring happiness. Water is fetched with a new ladle and then, back at home, is put into clean bowls, which are placed on the offering table. Afterwards, a few ladles of water are put into a clean basin and milk is added. In order of seniority, each family member washes their mouth, face, and hands.

This is how things used to be in the past, but now, on the thirtieth, before going to bed, a bucket of water with three pieces of burning incense pasted on top and a *kha btags* tied around it is prepared from the household well or from the village water supply. Then, the bucket is put in the yard or on the roof.

## II. TWENTY-NINTH, DGU GTOR

On this day, at around eight or nine o'clock in the morning, villagers go to Skye dgu Monastery where a ceremony called Dgu gtor is held. Families with monk relatives bring snacks, fruit, and bread for their relatives. Everyone dresses up in their best clothes. In the name Dgu gtor, *dgu* is nine while *gtor* refers to *gtor ma*, which are red or white cones made from barley flour that are used as effigies that embody evil forces. Before Dgu gtor, monks make

*gtor ma* and chant over it to exorcise dangers, evils, sickness, and unclean things. Just before noon, the *gtor* is carried out and thrown over a cliff, symbolically throwing away all bad things. Elders gather to see it thrown. After this, a '*cham*'<sup>129</sup> dance is performed.

### III. PERSONAL ACCOUNT: PREPARATIONS IN XINING

In Xining in 2008, we prepared for Lo sar three days prior. Shopping was done in the supermarket on the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth. Because our house in Xining was new, there was not much cleaning to do. In our apartment complex there were about six hundred families, twice as many as in Seng ze Village. The physical size of the community however is much smaller than Seng ze because of its vertical nature. Only ten families are Tibetan; all the others are Han Chinese. Neighbors cleaned their windows, but did not move things outside for cleaning. Each family pasted *duilian*, 'antithetical couplets,' on two square red papers on either side of their door. The *duilian* expressed the families' wishes. For example, "*He shun yi men you bai fu ping an er zi zhi qian jing*," which means, "A good family has a large fortune, but safety is worth as much as gold." No Tibetan families posted Chinese *duilian*.

### IV. THIRTIETH, GNAM DGUNG, THE DAY BEFORE LO SAR

In Seng ze Village, the thirtieth is called *gnam dgung*, 'full sky'. Nothing special is done on this day. People complete unfinished work, clean the yards, windows, make *tshe mar*, and hang prayer flags. At night, before going to bed, a bucket of water with three pieces of burning incense and a *kha btags* attached is once again put outside on the roof or in the yard.

In Xining, on this day in 2008, my mother put a bucket of water on a balcony to purify it, as she would in Seng ze. At midnight, fire-crackers were set off by our Chinese neighbors. My elder brother and I went to the upstairs balcony to see them. My monk brother and my sister also came out to see them, but my

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<sup>129</sup> '*cham*' is a ritual dance in which monk dancers wear masks and ornamented costumes.

parents had already gone to bed. The whole night I could barely sleep because of the constant deafening explosions of fire-crackers. In Seng ze village, some firecrackers are set off at around midnight but, after that, they can barely be heard. Most people go to bed at midnight.

## V. THE FIRST DAY OF LO SAR

The first day of Lo sar is called Tshes gcig, the first day of the month. Most families get up around six a.m. In their own yard, men and children light a pile of cypress, yelling, "*Lha rgyal lo* Victory to the gods!" and set off fire-crackers. Meanwhile, women prepare breakfast, boiling *gro ma* as well as milk tea. After burning all the cypress and setting off all the fire-crackers, all family members wash their mouth, face, and hands with the *skar chu*; they pour a little *skar chu* on their head, rub it over their scalp with their right hand and say, "*Bkru lo, bkru lo, bkru lo, nad bkru lo, gdon bkru lo, nad gdon gdon 'dre bkru lo*, Wash away, wash away, wash away, wash away illness, wash away evils, and wash away all illnesses and evils." Then all family members go to the shrine room to eat a little *tshe mar*, a symbol of long life. After this, they go to the kitchen and eat a little bread, saying "*Kha gro!*" *Kha* is mouth; *gro* is bread, and together means wishing to have bread in the mouth for all people. Then, everyone starts breakfast. The main food at breakfast is *gro mar mar khul* (see food section). Other foods include bread and milk tea.

After breakfast people dress up; most wear Tibetan robes, though a few young people and children wear new western-style clothes. People go to the Rgya nag ma Ni and light lamps in the village temples. After this, some people go to perform *lha mjal* to worship gods (at Skye dgu Monastery). Families with cars go in their cars, but those without cars go by taxi. In the monastery, people visit all the temples and offer money, mostly one RMB, on Buddha and deities' statues. Then, people mostly stay at home; on the first day of Lo sar people do not go to others' houses. For lunch, meat, *mog mog* (meat dumplings), yoghurt, and dishes such as potato, egg with tomato, cabbage and potato noodle are prepared by daughters and mothers. Dinner is usually noodle soup.

In 2008 in Xining, on the first day of Lo sar, after washing



our faces and eating breakfast, my whole family stayed at home and watched a few videos of Buddhist teachings downloaded from the internet. For lunch and dinner, my mother and sister cooked such Chinese dishes as potato, celery, tomato with egg, and also made *mog mog*.

## VI. AFTER THE FIRST DAY OF LO SAR

After the first day of Lo sar a game called *the ge* is played. Friends and relatives are invited and visited. People dance and sing. In Xining, some relatives invited my family to restaurants, but not to their homes.

THE GE. *The ge* is played by all people except old men during Lo sar from the first day to fifteenth day of the first lunar month. *The ge* refers to both sheep knucklebones and the game played with them. The game needs no specific court; it is generally played with the players sitting on the ground in a circle. A *the ge* has two distinct flanks, and two faces, called *rta* 'horse', *drel* 'mule', *lug* 'sheep', and *ra* 'goat' in order of power. There are three ways of playing *the ge*: *bko*, *rgyag*, and *gdams*. Only boys play *bko*. One of five or six players draws a circle on the ground, which must be large enough to put one, two, or three *the ge* from each player inside. Everyone throws one *the ge* to see who plays first (following the order above), and then places all but one of their *the ge* in the center of the circle in a pile. The boys stand four or five meters from the edge of the circle and, in order from horse to goat, throw *the ge* at the pile in the center. They keep any *the ge* they knock out.

*Rgyag* is the most common form of *the ge* and can be played by anyone. Every player first throws two *the ge*, deciding the order as per below (from highest to lowest).

horse	horse
horse	mule
horse	sheep
horse	goat
mule	mule

mule  
mule  
sheep  
sheep  
goat

sheep  
goat  
sheep  
goat  
goat

Then, the winner collects all the *the ge* and throws them. Next, he/she tries to collect *the ge* by successfully flicking a horse *the ge* at another horse *the ge* (or a sheep at a sheep, etc.), without touching any other *the ge*, she/he may collect one of those *the ge*. This person then continues flicking until a *the ge* touches another *the ge* which is not a pair. Then, the next person in order plays. When all the *the ge* have been collected, the winner is the person with the most *the ge*.

*Gdams* is simpler. The order is decided as before, and then the first player throws all *the ge* and counts the number of whichever there is most of: horse, mule, sheep or goat. Then, the next player collects all the *the ge* and throws them, the aim being to throw more of whatever the previous player threw the most of. For example, if a person throws ten *the ge*, and there are four goat, two sheep, one horse, and three mules, then the next person needs to throw more than four goats in order to win. This game is especially popular with older women.

In Xining, not many people have *the ge* with them. Moreover, Tibetan families are scattered throughout the city. Seng ze villagers in Xining therefore do not play *the ge* during Lo sar.

VISITING. On the fourth, fifth, and sixth of the first lunar month, families invite guests for lunch. If a family has sons or daughters, their friends are invited on one day. Maternal relatives are invited on one day, paternal relatives on another day. Meat, *mog mog*, yogurt, dishes, snacks, and beverages are displayed. Visitors are invited after lunch is prepared around twelve o'clock and stay for around two hours to eat and chat before going home.

TWELFTH, THIRTEENTH, FOURTEENTH, AND FIFTEENTH OF LO SAR (SMYUNG GNAS). From the tenth to fifteenth of Lo sar is *Rgya nag 'bum chen* (see rituals above). Every two days

*smyung gnas* 'fasting' is held in the main temple. There are two or three pairs of *smyung gnas* in a year. It can be held by individuals or the Rgya nag ma Ni Committee. During these days, hosts invite monks from Skye dgu Monastery and provide food and tea for them. They also consistently light butter lamps in the temple. One *smyungy gnas* takes two days. The first day is called *gro gzhes*, meaning lunch, and the other day is called *ngag bcad*, meaning no speaking. At noon on *gro gzhes*, participants sit on cushions on the ground and eat as much as they can, but do not eat any meat. After standing, participants cannot eat any more till the morning of the day after *ngag bcad*. During these two days of fasting, participants attend chanting in the main temple. People who can chant scripture do so, but those who cannot simply rest. On the second day, participants are not allowed to eat, drink, or speak, except for chanting.

In Xining in 2008, on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month, people celebrated *Yuanxiaojie*, a Chinese festival; they ate *tangyuan*, stuffed dumplings made of glutinous rice flour served in soup, and set off fire crackers. For my family it was an ordinary day.

## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

- 'ba' ga འབའ་ག འ branch from a bush
- 'Ba' thang འབའ་ཐང་། \*place
- 'bras འབྲས། rice
- 'Bri stod འབྲི་སྟོད། \*place
- 'Bum chen འབུམ་ཆེན། \*festival
- 'Bum chung འབུམ་ཆུང་། \*festival
- 'cham འཆམ། religious dance
- 'dzum འཛུམ། wild garlic
- 'khor lo འཁོར་ལོ། prayer wheel
- bag leb བག་ལེབ། bread
- bar do བར་དོ། the realm between death and rebirth
- chab khra ཆབ་ཁྲ། \*a type of waistband
- Chab mdo ཆབ་མདོ། \*place
- Chengdu 成都 \*place
- Chu dmar རྩ་དམར། \*place
- chur ba རྩར་བ། cheese
- dazhuan 大专 junior college
- Deng Xiaoping 邓小平 \*person
- Dgu gtor དགུ་གཏོར། \*a festival
- drel དྲེལ། mule
- du rgyan phyag pa དུ་རྒྱན་ཕྱག་པ། cleaning chimneys
- duilian 对联 antithetical couplets
- g.yung drung གཡུང་རྩུང་། swastika
- glo gcu གློ་གཙུ། fried dough twist
- Gnam gang གནམ་གང་། 'full sky'
- gro gcu གྲོ་གཙུ། twisted bread
- gro gzhas གྲོ་གཞས། lunch
- gro kar གྲོ་ཀར། colorful bread
- gro ma གྲོ་མ། wild yam

Gto གཏོ། \*ritual  
 gtor ma གཏོར་མ། dough effigy  
 guangchang 广场 square  
 He shun yi men you bai fu ping an er zi zhi qian jing 和顺 一门有  
 百福 平安二字值千金 an antithetical couplet  
 Jianliabao 健力宝 a domestic carbonated drink  
 kha btags ཁ་བཏགས། white silk scarf  
 kha gro ཁ་གྲོ། good luck  
 Kha rgya ཁ་རྒྱ། \*place  
 Khams pa ཁམས་པ། people from Khams  
 lha mjal ལྷ་མཇལ། worship god  
 lhag rnyen ལྷག་རྟེན། temple keeper  
 Lug ལུག། sheep  
 mdo rna མདོ་རྒྱ། ear ring  
 Mgo log མགོ་ལོག། \*place  
 mog mog མོག་མོག། dumplings  
 mu stegs ston pa drug མུ་སྟེགས་སྟོན་པ་བླུག། the six devils  
 Nang chen རང་ཆེན། \*place  
 pho zha ཕོ་ཞ། \*a type of rtsam pa  
 Phyag na rdo rje ཕྱག་ན་རྡོ་རྗེ། \*deity  
 Qiang 羌 Qiang  
 Qinghai 青海 \*place  
 Ra ར། goat  
 ra gses ར་གསེས། living/ bed room  
 Ra shus ར་ཤུས། \*place  
 Rdo drug 'bum drug རྡོ་བླུག་འབུམ་བླུག། six syllables carved on six stones  
 Rdza chu རྩ་ཆུ། river  
 Rdzogs chen རྩོགས་ཆེན། \*monastery  
 Rgya nag ma Ni རྒྱ་ནག་མ་ཉི། \*place  
 rgyan shan རྒྱན་ཤན། a cloth  
 Rigs gsum mgon po རིགས་གསུམ་མགོན་པོ། \*place

Rnga ba རྩ་བ། \*place

rta རྩ་ horse

rtsam pa རྩ་མ་བ། roasted barley flour

Sa skya ས་སྐྱ། \*sect

Seng ze སེང་ཟེ། \*place

Phyug pa ཕྱུག་པ། \*place

sgyid sgrog སྐྱིད་སྒོག་ \*a type of waistband

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shus ded ལུས་དེད། a cane of wood

Sichuan སུའུ་ཁུ། \*place

skar chu སྐར་ཅུ་ 'morning star water'

Skye dgu སྐེ་དགུ་ \*place

Smon lam སྐོན་ལམ། \*festival

smyung gnas སྐྱུང་གནས། fasting

sprul sku སྐུ་ལྷ། a reincarnation lama

sram སྐམ། otter skin

Stobs ldan སྐྱོབས་ལྡན། \*person

Stod mgo སྐོད་མགོ་ \*place

tangyuan 汤圆 stuffed dumplings

thang ga ཐང་ག། religious painting

the ge ཐེ་གེ་ a game

ther ma ཐེར་མ། silk

this pu ཐེས་པུ། \*a type of rtsam pa

thud ཐུད། cake

thug pa ཐུག་པ། noodles

tsha ru ཐ་རུ། lamb skin

Tshe bzung ཐེ་བཟུང་། \*scripture

Tshes gcig ཐེས་གཅིག་ the first day of the New Year

Tuigeng huanlin 退耕还林 return farmland to forest

Xining 西宁 \*place

*yig brgya* ཡིག་བརྒྱ 'hundred words'

Yuanxiaojie 元宵节 \*a festival

Yul shul ཡུལ་ཤུལ། \*place

*zan* ཟན། \*a type of *rtsam pa*

*zla ba* ཟླ་བ། moon/month

Zu mo ཟུ་མོ། \*place

WRITE NEW VOCABULARY HERE



WRITE YOUR EVALUATION HERE

## VOCABULARY

Ask these questions to a partner.

1. Do you prefer to be a host or a guest?
2. At parties in your hometown, do people sit in order of seniority?  
What is the order of seniority?
3. What infrastructure would you like to build in your hometown?
4. Who is a person that inspires you?
5. Do you know how to chant any mantras?
6. How often do you visit your maternal relatives? Who is your most important maternal relative? Who do you see more often – your maternal or paternal relatives?
7. Apart from firecrackers, what else can be set off?
8. Do you think social connections are important? Do you think they should be important?
9. What is the staple food in your hometown?
10. What kind of things do you download from the internet?
11. When you wear a Tibetan robe, are you behaving traditionally, habitually, or naturally?
12. What places do you regard as sacred?

## WYLIE

Write the Tibetan for the Wiley, then check in your book.

rgya nag ma Ni

'Ba' thang

*smyung gnas*

*'dzum*

*glo gcu*

Tshes gcig

*yig brgya*

*shus ded*

*rgyan shan*

*mu stegs ston pa drug*

*lha mjal*

*kha btags*

*gro gcu*

*g.yung drung*

*'khor lo*

*'dzum*

*'bras*

*'cham*

## EXERCISES

Do these exercises, then check your answers in the text.

*institute kilometer field school household wall mountain  
company village*

Looking down on the village from either \_\_\_\_\_, one would see that most of the \_\_\_\_\_ is occupied by companies. In the upper village, there is a large vegetable \_\_\_\_\_, and next to it is an abandoned rug factory and a road construction \_\_\_\_\_. Not far from there is an \_\_\_\_\_ of agricultural science and the village \_\_\_\_\_. About six households are scattered in the upper village. In the middle of the village is Rgya nag ma Ni, a \_\_\_\_\_ of white mani stones. Beside it is the prefecture abattoir. The lower village is scattered with \_\_\_\_\_ s and ends with another vegetable field. The distance between the upper village and lower village is about three \_\_\_\_\_ s.

Eventually his prediction \_\_\_\_\_ true; the mani pile \_\_\_\_\_ enormous. It even \_\_\_\_\_ one of the villagers' sources of income. Though people \_\_\_\_\_ ed and \_\_\_\_\_ ed, carving mani was their main means of subsistence. Most families \_\_\_\_\_ a very small number of yaks, only enough to \_\_\_\_\_ for their own family. Pilgrims from other places, especially nomads, \_\_\_\_\_ ed their yaks, sheep, fur, cheese, and butter for mani stones.

On the fourth, fifth, and sixth of the first lunar month, families iivtne guests for lunch. If a fliyma has sons or daughters, their frnsedi are invited on one day. Maternal reatlevis are invited on one day, paanretl relatives on another day. Meat, *momo*, yogurt, dishes, scakns, and beverages are disdeyalp. Visitors are invited after lunch is prpedera around twelve o' clock and stay for ardnuo two hours to eat and chat bfeero going home.

*by from to in of up of so*

Villagers have three sources \_\_\_\_\_ water: public running water, private wells, and the Rdza chu River. The river was used \_\_\_\_\_ most families before it became polluted. At the same time, villagers' incomes have increased, and \_\_\_\_\_ families far \_\_\_\_\_

the river can afford \_\_\_\_\_ dig their own wells. Even families near the river now have wells too. Public running water is situated \_\_\_\_\_ front \_\_\_\_\_ Rgya nag ma Ni and is used mostly \_\_\_\_\_ adjacent families. The abattoir built this facility \_\_\_\_\_ Seng ze Village. Since 2003, many wells have dried \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ people must go \_\_\_\_\_ the public tap \_\_\_\_\_ fetch water.

Now, villagers' main source of income (come/comes) from carving mani stones. The process of carving stones (is/are) as follows: on the right side of the front mountain, three kilometers from the village, (is/are) white quartz deposits. This is (share/shared) by the whole village and no particular person or group of people (own/owns) it. People (put/puts) explosive charges on top of the mountain, (detonate/detonated) them, and (collect/collected) the rubble. In 2006, a road was (build/built) so that trucks could (go/went) to the foot of the mountain and (load/loaded) stones. Prior to this, it was very difficult to (drive/drove) there; most villagers (carry/carried) stones on their backs in baskets. Before the use of explosives, (introduce/introduced) in the 1980s, villagers (use/used) hammers to (break/broke) rocks.

## CONTENT

1. Who built the Rgya nag ma Ni? When?
2. What sect do locals follow? What are some rituals they join?
3. How do villagers generate income? Why don't they farm?
4. What are the differences between ordinary and ceremonial dress?
5. How is the transportation and education in Seng ze Village?
6. How are preparations in the city and village different?
7. How do people play *the ge*?
8. Which do you think is more interesting – Lo sar in the village or city?
9. What do you think will happen to Lo sar celebrations in the future?
10. What different jobs do men and women have during Lo sar?
11. What different things do young and old people do in Lo sar?
12. What are the advantages and disadvantages of living in a city and village?

## APPENDIX ONE: QUIZZES

### QUIZ ONE: GSHONG BA

1. What county is Gshong ba in?  
a. Xunhua b. Minhe c. Haidong d. Rdo sbis
2. Apart from Lo sar, what is the most important local ritual?  
a. Digging caterpillar fungus. b. Rdo sbis *lab tse*.  
c. Lo sar. d. Buddhism.
3. How many special days are celebrated for Gshong ba's Lo sar?  
a. Fifteen. b. Five. c. Three. d. One
4. Whose earlobes are pulled during the wedding?  
a. The bride's. b. The matchmaker's. c. The groom's. d. Women.
5. What are placed on Lo sar trees?  
a. Butter. b. Tso sdong.  
c. Candies, jujubes and other sweets. d. Branches.
6. What does "Lo sar bzang!" mean?  
a. Congratulations! b. Basketball competition.  
c. New year is happy! d. Happy New Year!
7. Which of these is not associated with the first day of Lo sar?  
a. Basketball competition. b. Visiting. c. Eating. d. Firecrackers.
8. The rtsam pa figure of A myes 'bar ma is shaped like a...  
a. Buddha. b. *gtor ma*. c. Woman. d. Illness.
9. What happens on the eighth day of Lo sar?  
a. Firecrackers. b. Basketball competition.  
c. Lo sar finishes. d. People wake up early.
10. Where do villagers go on the last day of Lo sar?  
a. The local village. b. The local monastery.  
c. The local *lab rtse*. d. They go to bed.

## QUIZ TWO: RTSI GZHUNG THANG

1. In which county is Rtsi gzhung thang?  
a. Gansu. b. Da lun. c. Tianzhu. d. China.
2. Villagers are...  
a. herders. b. farmers. c. Muslims. d. wealthy.
3. What language do villagers speak?  
a. Tibetan. b. Wuwei Chinese dialect.  
c. Qinghai Chinese dialect. d. Mongol.
4. What is the most important livestock?  
a. Sheep. b. Chickens. c. Yak. d. Dogs.
5. What are two important sources of income?  
a. Education and livelihood. b. Language and religion.  
c. Migrant labor and collecting caterpillar fungus.  
d. Migrant labor and education.
6. Which of these is an important Lo sar preparation?  
a. House cleaning. b. Livestock.  
c. Tibetan Buddhism. d. Migrant labor.
7. Where is Zaoye Niangniang sent?  
a. Heaven. b. Her mother's home. c. Hell. d. Lo sar.
8. Why are water and vinegar poured on a hot stone?  
a. To celebrate Lo sar. b. To cure illness.  
c. To pray to deities. d. To purify the home.
9. Who is greeted first on Lo sar?  
a. Parents. b. Grandparents.  
c. Zaoye Niangniang. d. *Bsang*.
10. How do villagers decide who should avoid the bride?  
a. Using zodiac signs. b. The bride's entourage.  
c. Milk. d. The last day of Lo sar.

### QUIZ THREE: BDE CHEN

1. What country is Bde chen in?  
a. Bkra shis phyug lung thang. b. Tianzhu. c. China. d. Gansu.
2. Which of these groups is not found in Tianzhu?  
a. Yugur. b. Hui. c. Tibetan. d. Lisu.
3. Who can't renew the village *lab rtse*?  
a. Men. b. Children. c. Women. d. Elders.
4. What can the 'god horse' do?  
a. Die. b. Solve people's problems.  
c. Cure horses' illnesses. d. Write in Tibetan.
5. Villagers practice ...  
a. pastoralism b. income c. agriculture d. herder
6. Which of these is not an essential gift?  
a. Liquor. b. *Kha btags*. c. Tea. d. Apples.
7. Who is responsible for house cleaning?  
a. The female household head. b. The household head.  
c. A female. d. The house male.
8. Why don't women visit ancestral graves?  
a. They don't like their ancestors. b. That is taboo.  
c. They are very busy. d. They do visit the graves.
9. When do families consecrate a *tshe thar*?  
a. The first day of Lo sar. b. The third day of Lo sar.  
c. The fifth day of Lo sar. d. The seventh day of Lo sar.
10. On which day is the last special activity?  
a. The fifteenth. b. The seventh. c. The tenth. d. The first.

## QUIZ FOUR: ME TOG LUNG BA

1. What does Me tog lung ba mean?  
a. Chab cha. b. Flower. c. Flower goddess. d. Flower valley.
2. The first inhabitants of the village came from...  
a. Hualong. b. China. c. Guide. d. Me tog lung ba.
3. Which ethnic group is not in the village?  
a. Mongol. b. Hui. c. Han. d. Tibetan.
4. What religion do local Han follow?  
a. Islam. b. Tibetan Buddhism. c. Christianity. d. Communism.
5. Villagers practice...  
a. agro-pastoralism b. pastoralism c. agriculture d. income
6. What is the biggest local festival?  
a. Wedding. b. *Lab rtse*. c. Christmas. d. Holidays.
7. Who kills sheep and pigs?  
a. Women. b. Children. c. Men. d. Nobody.
8. Who prepares bread?  
a. Women. b. Children. c. Men. d. Nobody.
9. What is placed on the walls as an offering?  
a. Butter. b. Ice. c. Firecrackers. d. *Bsang*.
10. What ritual do girls have at 17 or 19?  
a. Lo sar. b. Hair changing. c. Folk song. d. Funeral.



## QUIZ FIVE: KHAMS PA

1. Most people in Rdza stod are...  
a. Tibetans. b. Americans. c. Angry. d. Mongols.
2. When was Rdza stod established?  
a. 1963-1964. b. 1936-1946. c. 1649-1664. d. 1983.
3. What effect did the mine have on local people?  
a. Mostly negative. b. Mostly positive.  
c. Mostly pastoral. d. Education.
4. Where did the ecological migrants move to?  
a. The town. b. The grassland. c. The school. d. The mine
5. Why could some people become vegetarians?  
a. Buddhism improved. b. Transport improved.  
c. The mine improved. d. Ecological migration.
6. When do locals have their hair cut?  
a. Three days before Lo sar. b. Two days before Lo sar.  
c. One day before Lo sar. d. Lo sar.
7. When are fireworks set off?  
a. Midday. b. Midnight.  
c. Midway. d. Middle Earth.
8. What is snow lion blessed water?  
a. The first water collected in the New Year.  
b. The water from the river. c. Snow lion's milk. d. Liquor.
9. What is said to resemble an eagle in flight?  
a. Dancers' hands. b. Dancers 'hats.  
c. Dancers' sleeves. d. Dancer's feet.
10. Who chants with monks after sunset?  
a. Women. b. Girls. c. Villagers. d. Males.

## QUIZ SIX: 'BRI DZI

1. What is the most important animal for villagers?  
a. Yaks. b. Cows. c. Chickens. d. Pigs.
2. Who previously ruled The bo?  
a. Co ne. b. The bo dpon po. c. Co ne dpon po. d. Dpon po.
3. Local houses are made of...  
a. Stone. b. Adobe. c. Wood. d. Pigs.
4. People in southern The bo follow...  
a. Buddhism. b. Islam. c. Bon. d. Pastoralism.
5. How many different types of stove god are there?  
a. Eight. b. Seven. c. Nine. d. Six.
6. What meat is always cooked to show hospitality to guests?  
a. pig. b. mutton. c. pork. d. sheep.
7. What is used to make sausages?  
a. bread. b. intestines. c. bristles. d. hand carts.
8. What bird is caught on the first day of Lo sar?  
a. magpie. b. eagle. c. thrush. d. chicken.
9. How do men chant the deity's incense scripture?  
a. quietly. b. secretly. c. angrily. d. loudly.
10. Who gather together for a meal on the last day of Lo sar?  
a. villages. b. immediate family members.  
c. pigs. d. herders.

## QUIZ SEVEN: BON SKOR

1. What language do elder villagers know a few words of?  
a. Tibetan. b. Mongol. c. English. d. Japanese.
2. Why did villagers relocate to their present location?  
a. The forest was cut down. b. The grassland turned to desert.  
c. A dam was built. d. Roads were improved.
3. Who is the founder of Bon skor?  
a. Bon skor. b. Bon rgan.  
c. Bya mdo dge bshes. d. A myse sgyo ri.
4. Which of these deities is not venerated by villagers?  
a. *srung ma* b. *klu* c. *gzhi bdag* d. *btsan*
5. Which phrase best describes Bon skor's transportation situation?  
a. Absolutely inaccessible. b. Somewhat remote.  
c. Completely unbelievable. d. Indestructible.
6. What is *rtsi to* used for?  
a. Cleaning. b. Weeping. c. Eating. d. Food.
7. Why do villagers put dung in their bag after they discard trash?  
a. They shouldn't carry an empty bag.  
b. They should carry a bag. c. They go home.  
d. Yak dung is very valuable.
8. How is red bread cooked?  
a. Boiled. b. Roasted. c. Cooked. d. Fried.
9. What do males ride when making Lo sar visits?  
a. Each other. b. Donkeys. c. Motorcycles. d. Bicycles.
10. Which days are *nyin nag*?  
a. The first and second. b. The sixth and seventh.  
c. The fifth and ninth. d. The second last and last.

## QUIZ EIGHT: SKU NANG

1. What township is Sku nang in?  
a. Dar tshe mdo. b. Lha sgang. c. Dkar mdzes. d. Sichuan.
2. Which of these forms of post-marital residence is not practiced in Sku nang?  
a. matrilocal. b. patrilocal. c. neolocal. d. ambilocal.
3. Where are locals' houses?  
a. In the summer pasture. b. in Chengdu.  
c. in the summertime. d. at the winter pasture.
4. What are Sha sdod bzhag bkra brag dkar po, Bzhag mo, and Zhu lu?  
a. people with special abilities  
b. important mountains near Sku nang  
c. monasteries near Sku nang d. clans in Sku nang
5. Local herders speak A mdo but local farmers speak...  
a. Khams b. Chinese c. Horpa d. Minyak
6. What is placed on top of discarded household garbage?  
a. a basket. b. dust. c. a stone. d. yak dung.
7. On the first day of Lo sar, the person who fetches water also...  
a. cooks noodles. b. smokes a cigarette.  
c. lights a fire. d. burns juniper on the roof.
8. What does the author's personal account describe?  
a. fetching water. b. fetching milk.  
c. visiting relatives. d. herding livestock.
9. Which of these is not shown in the pictures?  
a. Sku nang men in their best clothes.  
b. Women dancing in a family courtyard.  
c. Men offering *bsang* to mountain deities.  
d. The village monastery.
10. What do people do on the fifteenth day of Lo sar?  
a. wear their best clothes.  
b. dance. c. sing. d. all of these.

## QUIZ TEN: NOR MGO

1. Nor mgo villagers are ...  
a. pastoralism. b. pastoral. c. pastoralists. d. pacifists.
2. Nor mgo villagers belong to the Dme shul ...  
a. prefecture. b. province. c. clan. d. village.
3. Villagers have no \_\_\_\_\_ against singing love songs to relatives.  
a. idea. b. prescription. c. taboo. d. love.
4. Why don't villagers consult the *lha pa* any more?  
a. The *lha pa* ran away. b. The *lha pa* passed by.  
c. The *lha pa* stole away. d. The *lha pa* passed away.
5. Who is expected to stay at home to care for parents?  
a. The child. b. The oldest child.  
c. The youngest child. d. The favorite child.
6. Why do villagers care about the color of Lo sar bread?  
a. It is an omen for the coming year.  
b. It is an aspect of the coming year.  
c. It is unavoidable for the coming year.  
d. It is under the coming year.
7. Which of these is not an ingredient of *zhun*?  
a. Butter. b. Cheese. c. Milk. d. Sugar.
8. What are set off during Lo sar?  
a. Fires. b. Fireplaces. c. Firecrackers. d. Fire and brimstone.
9. Which of these parties is not held in Nor mgo?  
a. Hair changing. b. House warming party.  
c. Wedding party. d. Three year old's party.
10. How old are the children who join the children's Lo sar?  
a. Ten. b. Mostly over ten. c. Mostly under ten.  
d. Mostly tender.

## QUIZ ELEVEN: VILLAGE AND CITY

1. Seng ze is in the same prefecture as:  
a. Yul shul. b. Rdza stod. c. 'Bri dzi. d. Nor mgo.
2. What is the most significant structure in Seng ze?  
a. Rgya nag ma Ni. b. Rgya nag bla ma.  
c. Guinness Book of Records. d. The abattoir.
3. What is villagers' most important source of income?  
a. Migrant labor. b. Carving ma Ni stones.  
c. Digging ma Ni stones. d. Painting thang ka.
4. Which of these is not a division of clothing mentioned by the author?  
a. Men's and women's. b. Ordinary and ceremonial.  
c. Summer and winter. d. Children's and adults.
5. Rice is eaten...  
a. often. b. never. c. on special occasions. d. with blood.
6. What is used to paint a picture of a bow and arrow in front of each house?  
a. Soot. b. Milk. c. Ash. d. Dirt.
7. Which of these is not part of preparing for the new year in Seng ze?  
a. Making *tshe mar*. b. Hanging prayer flags.  
c. Preparing cypress. d. Making *tshe thar*.
8. Which word has a similar meaning to *gtor ma*?  
a. Effigy. b. Efficient. c. Effluent. d. Effective.
9. Lo sar in the city is ..... than Lo sar in the village.  
a. more complicated b. longer c. simpler d. happy
10. Why couldn't the author sleep on New Year's eve in Xining?  
a. She was too excited.  
b. There were too many firecrackers and fireworks.  
c. She ate too much and was sick.  
d. She was bored to death.

## QUIZ ANSWERS

### 1. GSHONG BA

1. A 2.B 3.B 4.B 5.C 6.D 7.A 8.C 9.B 10.B

### 2. RTSI GZHUNG THANG

1.C 2.A 3.B 4.A 5.C 6.A 7.A 8.D 9.B 10.A

### 3. BDE CHEN

1.C 2.D 3.C 4.B 5.A 6.D 7.A 8.C 9.A 10. C

### 4. ME TOG LUNG BA

1.D 2.A 3.A 4.B 5.A 6.B 7.C 8.A 9.B 10.B

### 5. KHAMS PA

1.A 2.A 3.A 4.A 5.B 6.B 7.B 8.A 9.A 10. D

### 6. 'BRI DZI

1.D 2.C 3.C 4.C 5.A 6.C 7.B 8.C 9.D 10. B

### 7. BON SKOR

1.B 2.C 3.B 4.D 5.B 6.A 7.A 8.D 9.C 10.B

### 8. SKU NANG

1.B 2.D 3.D 4.B 5.A 6.C 7.C 8.A 9.D 10. D

### 9. ZUR THOG MDA

1. C 2.B 3.C 4.B 5.B 6.A 7.A 8.B 9.C 10.A

### 10. NOR MGO

1.C 2.C 3.C 4.D 5.B 6.A 7.C 8.C 9.A 10. C

### 11. VILLAGE AND TOWN

1.B 2.A 3.B 4.D 5.C 6.A 7.D 8.A 9.C 10.B

## APPENDIX TWO: SELECTED VOCABULARY

- abode གནས་ཁང་། རྫོང་གནས། 营业所；住处
- above sea level རྒྱ་མཚོ་ངོས་ལས་མཐོ་ཚད། 海拔高度
- abstain འཛིན་པ། རྫོང་བ། 自制；放弃
- abundant མང་པོ། འཛད་མེད། 丰富的；充裕的
- accomplished རྩལ་དུ་བྱུང་བ། བྱང་པ་ཅན་གྱི། བྱང་ཆུབ་པ་འདི། དཔྱིས་ཕྱིན་པ་འདི། གྲུབ་འབྲས།  
有成就的，有造诣的，有教养的
- according to དེ་བསྟུན། གཞིར་བཟུང་གིས། 按照，根据
- address ལ་གཏད་པ། གཏན་འབེབས། 应对
- administrative འཛིན་སྐྱོང་གི། འགན་འཛིན་གྱི། 行政的
- adobe ཉི་བསེགས་ས་པག་ སོ་པག་ 泥砖
- aforementioned རྩོན་བརྗོད་པ། 上述的，前面提到的
- agriculture ཞིང་ལས་ 农业
- agro-pastoral community རོང་མ་འབྲོག་གི་མང་ཚོགས། 半农半牧社区
- agro-pastoralist ཞིང་ཕྱགས་གཉིས་གཉེར་མཁན། 半农半牧
- allocate བགོ་སྐྱལ། 分配
- amicable མཐུན་གཤིབ་ཅན། འདྲིས་བདེ་པོ། འགྲོགས་བདེ་པོ། 友好的，和睦的
- amplify རྒྱ་སྐྱེད་པ། རྗེ་ཆེར་སྤེལ་བ། 扩大，增强
- amulet རྒྱུང་འཁོར། 护身符
- ancestor ཕ་མེས། མེས་པོ། 祖宗，祖先
- ancestral graves མེས་པོའི་དུར་ས། 祖坟
- animal husbandry འབྲོག་ལས། 畜牧业
- animosity འཁོན་སེམས། ཞེ་འཁོན། 憎恶，仇恨，敌意
- annual income ལོ་རྒྱལ་བོའི་ཡོང་འབབ། 全年收入
- antiphonal རྒྱ་ཤགས། རེས་མས་མཉམ་གཞན་གྱི། 交互轮唱的
- antithetical couplets ཉིས་ཚིག་གླུར་བྱང་། 对联
- anxious བག་ཚ་བ། རྫོ་འཚབ། 焦虑的；担忧的；
- apartment complex རྫོང་ཤག་གནས་ཁང་། 综合住宅大楼，公寓大楼
- approximately ཏ་ལམ། ཕལ་ཆེད། 大约
- arbitrarily རང་སྣང་གང་དྲན་གྱི། 反复无常的



archery མདའ་ཚེད། 箭术

asphalt རྩ་ལྷན། 沥青

auspicious བག་ཤིས་པའི། 吉兆的，吉利的；幸运的 auspicious day 好日子  
；吉日良辰；黄道吉日 auspicious omen 吉祥；好兆头 adj. 吉  
兆的，吉利的；幸运的 lucky, benign

axis ཚངས་ཐིག་ རྩོག་ཤིང་། འཁོར་མདའ། 轴，中枢

barbed wire རྩགས་སྒྲིང་གཟེ་མ་ར་མགོ། 刺钢丝，刺铁丝

barbering སྐ་བཅར་བ། 为…理发

barely དེ་ཀ་ཙམ་དུ། 几乎不，刚刚，勉强

basin ཀ་ཏོ་ར། གཞོང་བ། 盆子

bedding མལ་ཆས། 寝具

beseech འཁོར་བྱེད་བ། 恳求

blackout ལྷན་ནག། རྩོག་ཆད་བ། 断电，灯火管制

blood-letting གཏར་ལ། གཏར་ཁ་རྒྱག་བ། 放血

bodyguard སྐ་སྤང་བ། 保镖

bonfire མེ་གོང་། མེ་སྐོང་། 营火

bow-tie ཕྱེ་ལེབ་གོང་མདུད། 领结

braid སྐའི་ལྷས་མ། རྩང་ལོ། 辫子

brandish གཡུག་བ། 挥舞；炫耀

break up ཐོར་བ། 破碎

breeder རྒྱུད་སྤེལ་བྱེད་པོ། 繁殖者

bristles བག་ཟེ། 猪鬃

burnt འཛིག་བ། 烧焦的

businessmen ཚོང་བ། 生意人

butcher གསོད་བ། རྩོག་གཙོད་བྱེད་པ། 屠宰

calamity ཚབས་ཆེ་བའི་རྒྱུན་ངན། 灾难

calves བོདུ། = བ་ལྷུགས་དང་སྐང་ཆེན་ཉ་ཆེན་མེལ་སྐྱེས་ཀྱི་ཕུ་གུ། 小牛

candies ཕྱེ་མ་ཀ་ར་དང་བྱ་རམ་སྐྱེས་ཀྱི་བསྐར་མ་ལྟ་བུ། 糖果

capable འཛོན་པོ། 能干的

carcass ཤི་རོ། 尸体

cardamom ཀ་ཀོ་ལ། ལུག་སྤེལ། 小豆蔻

cash དངུལ་རྒྱང་། 现金  
 catastrophe ཆག་སློ་ཆེན་མོ། 大灾难  
 cavalry སྐུ་དམག། 骑兵  
 ceiling ཐོག་པང་། 天花板  
 certificate ལག་འབྲེས། 证(明)书  
 charity ཐུན་པ། དགེ་སྤྱོད། 慈善  
 chimney དུ་ཁུང་། 烟囱  
 circumambulate བསྐོར་བ་བརྒྱབ། 绕行  
 circumstances སྐབས། གནས་སྐབས། 环境, 境况  
 clan གཏུང་རྒྱུད། རུས་རྒྱུད། ཆོ་བ། 氏族  
 clinic ཐུན་ཁང་རྒྱུང་རིགས་ཀྱི་བྱེ་བྲག། 诊所, 门诊部  
 collection fee ཀོ་སྒྲ། ཐོ་དངུལ། 托收费  
 collectively ཕྱོགས་བསྐྱུས་ཀྱི། ཐུན་མོང་གི། 全体地  
 college graduate སློབ་ཆེན་སློབ་ཐོན་པ། 大学毕业生  
 colorful paper ཆོན་མདོག་བྲག་བའི་ཤོག་བྲ། 华美的纸  
 commodity ཐུན་མཁའི་དངོས་རིགས། 商品, 日用品  
 competitive antiphonal songs ཐུ་ཤགས། 对歌  
 completeness ཡོངས་རྫོགས། ཆ་ཆང་བ། 完整; 完全; 完成  
 compound ཐེབ་པ། བསེ་སྦྱར་བྱེད་པ། 混合的  
 compulsory education ཐུས་བཅད་ཤེས་ཡོན། 必修教育  
 conifer branches ཐང་ཤིང་གི་ཡལ་ག། 针叶树分支  
 constitute ཆ་ཤས་སུ་གྱུར་བ་/ གཏོགས་པ། ཐུབ་པ། 构成, 组成  
 construction work བཟོ་སྐྱེན་ལས་རིགས། 建筑劳务  
 conversion བརྟེན་སྦྱར། 转换; 变换  
 convert བསྐྱུར་བ། བརྟེན་བ། 转变  
 cooking utensils ཐོད་ཆས། ཐབ་ཆས། ལུ་ཚྭ་ཐོད། 烹饪用具  
 corpse ཤི་རོ། 尸体  
 counterclockwise གཡོན་འཁོར། 饭时针方向  
 covertly གསང་བའི་སློན་ནས། 秘密地  
 crescendo ཐོ་གདངས་རིམ་ཐུར་གྱི། 声音渐增  
 cross-legged ཐུལ་གྱུང་། 翘着腿的; 盘着腿的

cultivate རྒྱ་སྐོར་སྤྲོད་འདེབས་པ། 耕作  
 customarily རྒྱུ་སྤུལ་གྱི། 习惯上  
 cylinder མདོང་དབྱིབས། 圆柱体  
 daubed བསྐྱ་བ། རྒྱག་པ། 涂抹  
 debt བུ་ལོན། 债务  
 degraded རི་ཞན་རི་སྐྱུག་ཏུ་འགོ་བ། 退化的  
 depict རི་མའི་མཚན་པ། 描述  
 descend མར་འབབ་པ། 下行； 下降  
 descendent རྒྱུད་པ། རིགས་རྒྱུད། 后代， 子孙  
 desertification རྒྱུ་ཐང་ཅན་ཏུ་འགྱུར་བ། 沙漠化  
 designated ཟུར་ཏུ་འདོན་པ། 指定的  
 devoid of མེད་པ། མྱོང་པ། དབེན་པ། 缺乏， 没有  
 dire circumstances ཉམ་ང་བའི་སྐབས་སུ། 在严峻的形势  
 discard རྒྱུར་བ། འདོར་བ། 抛弃  
 disrobe རྒྱ་སར་བབ་པ། 脱衣服  
 divide into བཞོ་བ། 分为， 分成  
 divination མོ། རྒྱ། བརྟག་པ། 预测， 算卦  
 domestic duties ཁྱིམ་ལས། 家务  
 don གོས་གྱུན་པ། 穿上  
 donations ཞལ་འདེབས། 捐款， 捐赠  
 dot ཏྲགས་བཏབ་པ། 点缀， 作小点记号  
 download བབ་ལེན། 下载  
 dowry བག་རྫོངས། 嫁妆  
 drench རྒྱང་བ། རྫོན་པར་བཟོ་བ། 使湿透  
 dress up རྒྱན་གོས་ཀྱིས་སྤྲུས་པ། 穿上盛装  
 drought ཐན་པ། 干旱  
 dry up སྐམ། (使) 干涸  
 earlobe རྩ་ཤལ། 耳垂  
 eaves (ཁང་པའི)གལ་འཕྱངས། 屋檐  
 ecological immigrant རྫོང་བརྩུད་རྟེན་འབྲེལ་གྱི་གནས་སྤོར་མཁན། 生态移民  
 eliminate འདོར་བ། སེལ་བ། 扫除

embroidery འཛེམ་རྒྱབས། 刺绣  
 embroiled in feuds དཀའ་རྒྱུག་ནང་གཡུག་པ། 使陷入争执  
 empty-handed ལག་སྟོང་། ཁ་སྟོང་ལག་སྟོང་། 空手  
 endangered ཉམས་པར་ཉེ་བའི 濒于灭绝的  
 endless རྫོགས་མཐའ་མེད་པ། 无止境的；连续的；  
 enforcing རན་སྒྲུལ་བྱེད་པ། 强迫  
 engaged ལས་ཀར་ཁུགས་པ། 从事于  
 enshrine མཆོད་ཤོམ་ནང་འཛིག་པ། མཆོད་ཡུལ་དུ་བབྱང་བ། 把…置于神龛内  
 entourage ཡ་ཁང་ཆང་གི་སྒྲུལ་མ 伴娘  
 escort སྒྲུལ་བ། 陪同；  
 exacerbate ཇིང་ན་ཇིང་སྒྲུག་ཏུ་འགྱུར་བ། 恶化  
 exceptional དམིགས་བསལ་གྱི། 异常的；例外的  
 exorcise ལྷ་འདྲེ་སྟོང་ཐབས། གདོན་སྟོལ། 除怪，驱邪  
 exorcist ལྷ་འདྲེ་སྟོང་མཁན། 召魂者  
 expulsion ཕྱིར་འབྱད། 驱逐  
 fake རྒྱས་མ་བཟོ་བ། 伪造的，伪装的  
 family head ཁྱིམ་བདག། 户主  
 family shrine མཆོད་ཁང་། 家庭神殿  
 fasting རྒྱང་གནས། 禁食  
 fertile གཤེན་པོ། ས་བཅུད་བབྱང་པོ། 富饶的，肥沃的；  
 financial condition དཔལ་འབྱོར་གྱི་ཆ་རྒྱུན། 经济条件  
 flick མཆོད་ཁ་འཕེན་པ།  
 flitted འབྱུག་སྒྲེ་འཕྱར་བ། 轻快地飞  
 floodwater ཤུ་འོད། རྒྱ་ལྷག 洪水  
 fodder གཟན་སྒྲ། 饲料，草料  
 forbidden མི་ཆོག་པར་བཟོ་བ། 被禁止的  
 fortune-teller རྟེན་མཁན། མཚན་མཁན། 算命先生；预言家  
 found གཞི་འཛུགས་པ། 建于  
 fruitful རྒྱབ་འབྲས་ལན་པ། ཁེ་ཕན་ཅན། 富有成效的  
 gallivant འབྲུམ་འབྲུམ་བྱེད་པ། 闲逛  
 gambling རྒྱན་འཛུགས་པ། 赌博

garbage dump ཕྱགས་སྒྲིགས་ཕུང་བོ། 垃圾场  
generate ཐོན་བ། 产生,  
geographic location ས་གནས། 地域  
granary འབྲུ་ཁང་། 谷仓  
gravesite ཏུར་ས། 坟墓  
graze རྩ་བ་བ། 吃草  
grid electricity ཕྱགས་སྒྲིམ། སྒྲིག་དྲ། 电网, 网格  
habitat རང་བྱུང་གནས་ལུལ། 栖息地  
habitually རྒྱ་གཏར་ནས། འཆར་ཅན་དུ། ཉག་པར། 日常地, 习惯地  
harsh རྩལ་པོ། 严酷的; 严厉的  
headdress མགོ་དཀྲིས། 头巾  
hermit རི་ཁྲོད་བ། མཚམས་བ། 隐士, 遁世者  
hillocks རི་རྩུང་། 小丘、  
hollow ཁོང་ཁོང་། རྫོང་བ། 空的; 凹的  
hospitable ཁུས་བཀུར་བྱེད་གཟབ་ཅན། 热情友好的  
host གསལ་སྟོན་གྱི་སྒྲིན་བདག་མགོན་གཉིས། 主人, 主持人, 主办方  
household བྱིས་ཚང་། མི་ཚང་། 家庭, 户  
housewives བྱིས་བདག་མ། ཕྱག་མ། 家庭主妇  
hydropower station རྩ་ཕྱགས་སྒྲིག་འདོན་ས་ཆེགས། 水力发电站  
illiterate འབྲི་སྟོག་མི་ཤེས་པའི། ཡིག་རྫོངས་ཀྱི། 文盲的  
immediate family members བྱིས་མི། 一家人  
impaired འབེག་བ། 刺穿  
implement ལག་བསྟར། 执行  
impress དབར། 盖印  
imprison བཙོན་དུ་འཇུག་བ། 关押  
in order of seniority གན་གཞོན་གོ་རིམ་ལྟར། 按照辈分  
in order to རྒྱུ་དུ། 为了  
incarnate ཡང་སྤིང་བྱོན་བ། 化身  
incurable བཙོས་ཐབས་མེད་པའི་ནད། 不能医治的  
indispensable མེད་དུ་མི་རུང་བ། 不可缺少的  
inducement རྩུ་བྱིད། 诱因, 刺激物

infrastructure རྩ་གཞིའི་འཛུགས་སྐྱོན་/བཀོད་སྒྲིག་ 基础设施  
 initiate someone into something རྩོམ་གནང་སྦྱིན་པ། 介绍加入  
 inner-most རྩ་མ། སྒྲིག་མ། 内部的，里面的  
 inspired by རྩོ་སྦྱབས་སྤེལ་པ། སེམས་འགྲུལ་ཐེབས་པ། 激发，，赋予...灵感  
 inundated རྩམ་འགེབ་པ། རྩམ་སྒྲུབ་པ། 淹没；浸水  
 irrigate རིང་ས་སྐོགས་ལ་རྩ་འདྲན་པ་འཇ་བཏང་བ། 灌溉  
 itinerant merchants ས་གནས་སྒྲུལ་བོའི་ཚོང་བ། 流动的商人  
 job prospects ལས་ཀར་བཀོད་འཛུགས་གི་གོ་སྐབས། 工作前景  
 juniper needles འུག་ཐོང་གི་ལ་མ། 杜松刺  
 juniper འུག་ཐོང་། འུག་པ། (植) 杜松  
 keep ཉར་ཚགས་བྱེད་པ། 贮藏，保存  
 knead རྩོ་བ། གཡོ་བ། 捏制；揉合，  
 knucklebone ཇ་རྩུག་རྩས་ཚེགས། 指关节骨，膝关节骨  
 landlord ཁང་བདག་ 房东  
 lattice ལིང་ཚེ། ཏ་མ། 格架  
 lay men རྒྱ་བོ། 世俗人  
 leap month ལྷ་ལྷག། 闰月  
 leavened dough ལྷུ་རྩབས་ཀྱིན་མོག་ 酵母面团  
 lengthen རྩོ་རིང་དུ་གཏོང་བ། 延长  
 lent གཡར་བའི། 借给  
 lexical differences མིང་ཚིག་གི་ཁྱད་པར། 词汇差异  
 libation གསེར་སྦྱིམས། ཇ་ཕུད། ཆང་ཕུད། 饮酒  
 loaf of bread བག་ལེབ་གཅིག། (一条) 面包，  
 look down upon ཆེ་འདོད་བྱེད་པ། མཐོང་རྒྱུང་བྱེད་པ། 看不起，蔑视  
 loud speakers རྒྱུང་གྲགས་ 喇叭  
 lunar month ཉོར་ལྷ། = ལྷ་བས་འཛམ་གླིང་ལ་སྟོར་ཐེངས་གཅིག་གི་ཡུན། ཚེས་ལྷ། 农历  
 magic powers ལྷ་མའི་ནུས་པ། 魔力  
 majority མང་ཆེ་བ། 多数  
 malevolent forces མ་རྩང་གཏུག་ཅན། 邪恶的势力  
 mantra རྣམས་ཡིག་ 咒文  
 mass media རྒྱ་ཁྱབ་སྤེལ་ལམ། བརྒྱུད་ལམ། 大众传播媒体

matches འགན་ཐུང་། 比赛  
 matchmaker བར་བ། 媒人  
 maternal ཨ་མའི་ཕྱགས་ཀྱི། 母亲的，母系的，母方的  
 matrilocal མག་པ་སོང་བ། (婚后) 居住在女方的  
 mature ར་ཚད་སྒྲིན་པ། 成熟  
 maximum ཆེ་ཤོས། 最大量，最高的  
 meditator སྒོམ་རྒྱག་མཁན། སྒོམ་མཁན། སྒོམ་ཆེན། 禅修者  
 merit དགེ་བ། དགེ་ཆ། 功绩  
 migrant labor ཡུལ་རྒྱ་ངལ་ཚོ། 流动劳动力  
 mining གཏོར་ལས། 采矿  
 minister སྒོན་པོ། 大臣  
 monastic chanting ལ་ཏོན། ལལ་འདོན། 寺院的念咒  
 monogamous གཟའ་ཟླ་རྒྱུང་སྟེན་གྱི། 一夫一妻的，单配的  
 monogamy བཟའ་ཟླ་རྒྱུང་སྟེན། 一夫一妻制  
 monthly expenditure ཟླ་རེའི་འགོ་གོན། 月花费  
 moxibustion མེ་བཅའ། 艾灸，艾灼  
 natal home རྒྱུ་སའི་ཡུལ། 出生家  
 naturally རང་བཞིན་གྱིས། མ་བཅོས་པར། 自然地，天生地  
 neolocal ཁེར་འདུག་ཁེར་བྱིས་དུ་བྱང་བ། 新婚夫妇单独居住的  
 new year festivities ལོ་སར་གྱི་དགའ་སྟོན། 新年欢宴  
 nirvana ཐུང་འདས། 天堂；涅槃  
 no higher than དེ་ལས་མཐོ་མི་བྱང་བ། 不能高于  
 noose རྒྱས་ཐག་ཐག་ 套索；  
 not only ... but ... དེ་ལས་མ་ཚད། ད་དུང་། 不但…而且  
 nunnery ཨ་ནེའི་དགོན་པ། 尼姑寺  
 odor འི་ངད། འི་མ། 气味，气息  
 oil-bearing ལྷུ་མ་འབྲ། 含油的  
 oink ཕག་གི་བྱར་སྒྲ། 猪叫声  
 omen ཏྲགས་མཚན། ཐུ་ལྷས། 征兆，预兆  
 origin stories ཐོག་མའི་གཏམ་རྒྱུད། 原创故事  
 ornament མཛེས་རྒྱན། རྒྱན་ཆ། 装饰，装饰物

over-grazing རྒྱགས་འཚོས་ནས་རྩ་སར་གཏོར་བརྒྱག་ཐེབས་པ། 过度放牧  
 pass away ཤི་བ། རློག་འགུམས་པ། ཆེ་ལས་འདས་པ། 去世  
 pastoral community འཕྲོག་སྡེ། 游牧社区  
 pasture ལྗ་ཁ། ལྗ་ས། ལྗ་ཐང་། 牧场，草原  
 paternal ཡེ། ཡ་ཕྱགས་ཀྱི་(གཉེན་ཉེ།) ཡ་རྒྱུད་ཀྱི། 父亲的  
 patrilocal མན་འ་མར་བསྐྱས་པ། (婚后) 居住在男方的  
 Pesticides འབྲུ་སྒྲན། 农药  
 phone ཁ་པར་གཏོང་བ། 打电话  
 physically disabled ཞ་བོ། དབང་བོ་སྦྱོན་ཅན། 肢体残疾人士  
 piglets ཡག་ཕྱུག 小猪  
 pigsty ཡག་ཁང་། 猪圈  
 pilgrimage གནས་སྐོར། གནས་མཇལ། 朝圣之旅  
 pitched-roofed ཁང་ལེབ། 搭  
 point of interest རྩོ་སྤང་། 兴趣点  
 policy སྲིད་ཅུས། 政策，方针  
 polish འཕྲིས་བ། 擦亮  
 polyandry རྩོ་བོ་མང་པོ་སྟེན་མཁན། 一妻多夫  
 post-marital གཉེན་སྒྲིག་བྱས་རྗེས། 婚后  
 preferred འོས་མཚམས་ཀྱི། 首选的，更适合的  
 preparatory period ག་སྒྲིག་གི་དུས་སྐབས། 预备期间  
 prescribed བཅའ་བ་རིམ་གྱི། 规定的  
 prestigious སྒན་གཤམ་ཅན། གཅིགས་ཆེ་བའི། 享有声望的，声望很高的  
 primary school སློབ་རྒྱུད་། 小学  
 prohibition བཀག་ཚེས། དགག་བྱ། 禁止，禁令  
 prominent མངོན་གསལ་ཅན། 显著的  
 proscription རལ་མ་ངན་འགོག་སྤང་། 禁止  
 prosperous ཡར་རྒྱས་ཅན། རྒྱག་པོ། གོང་འཕེལ་རྒྱ་འགོ་བཞིན་པའི། 繁荣的；兴旺的  
 prostrate ཕྱག་འཚལ་བ། 叩头  
 proximity ཉེ་འབྲེལ། 接近，亲近  
 pull down བཞིག་པ། 拆毁  
 purify མཚོལ་བསང་། བྱབས་བྱས། (使)净化



quite ཤིན་ཏུ་རབ་ཏུ། 相当，十分，很，  
 rafter ཁང་བའི་ལྗམ་ཤིང་། 椽  
 rammed earth རྒྱགས་ཀྱིས་ནན་པའི་ས། 冲压成的土  
 rapeseed oil རྩུངས་ལྗུ། ཀེ་ཆེའི་ལྗུ། 菜籽油  
 rearrange བསྐྱར་དུ་བཀོད་སྒྲིག་བྱེད་པ། 重新排列  
 reciprocate རྒྱུན་ལན་འཇལ་བ། བཟང་ལན། 报答  
 recurrent nightmares འཆར་ཅན་གྲིབ་གནོན། 周期性的，循环的  
 referred to མིང་གཞན་ལ། 被交付， 被称呼为  
 refuse གད་སྒྲིགས། འཕྱག་བདར། 垃圾， 废物  
 regard བརྟེན་མཐོང་། 视为  
 reign སྲིད་དབང་གི་དུས་ལུན། རྒྱལ་རབས། 君主统治， 在位期  
 reinforced དཔུང་སྒྲོན་གཏོང་བ། 加强  
 relinquish འདོར་བ། དབྱུག་པ། 放弃  
 relocated གནས་སྤོར་བ། 重新安置  
 reputation ལྷན་གྲགས། རྒྱུང་གྲགས། གྲགས་པ། 声誉  
 resemblance འདྲ་འཛུངས། 相似  
 resettled གནས་གཞན་དུ་བཅའ་སྡོད་བྱེད་པ། 重新定居  
 result in མཐུག་འབྲས། 导致， 结果是  
 ritual ཆོས་ལུགས་ཆོ་ག་ 宗教仪式  
 robe pouch རུམ། 囊状袋  
 rolling pin (བག་ལེབ།)སྒྲིལ་ཤིང་། གདལ་རིལ། 擀面棍  
 rotating schedule རེས་འཁོར་གྱི་ལས་འཆར། 轮流的计划  
 sand dunes ཐེ་སྐང་། ཐེ་འབུར། 沙丘  
 saplings ཤིང་གི་ལྗུ་གུ་ཤིང་མོན། 树苗  
 satellite dish འཁོར་སྐར་འཕྲིན་གཏོང་སྤེར་ལེབ། 圆盘式卫星电视天线  
 scatter གཏོར་བ། གམ་པ། 分散  
 scold ཁ་རྩུང་གཏོང་བ། གཤེ་གཤེ་གཏོང་བ། 责骂  
 scorched ཆ་སྤེག་གཏོང་བ། 使烧焦  
 scrub སུར་བདར་གཏོང་བ། འཕྲིད་བདར་རྒྱག་པ། 擦洗  
 seldom བརྒྱུལ་མ་ཙམ། སྐབས་རེ་ཙམ། 很少， 难得  
 senior woman སུད་མིང་དར་མ། 年长的妇女

set off (ཤོག་སྤགས་)ལྷག་པ། 使爆炸，放  
 sewage བཙོག་མུ། ལྷ་ཉིགས། 污物  
 showcase གསལ་བོར་མངོན་པ། 使展现  
 signal བད་རྟགས། 信号  
 signify གོ་དོན་མཛོན་པ། བད་དོན་མཛོན་པ། 表示；意味  
 sinicization ལྷ་ལྷགས་སུ་འབྱུར་བ། 使中国化  
 situated གནས་པ། ཆགས་ཡོད་པ། 坐落于  
 skyward རྣམ་མཁའི་ཕྱགས་སུ། 向天空的，向上的  
 slaughter བཤའ་བ། 屠杀  
 smoldering འདྲན། 阴燃  
 social connections སྤྱི་ཚོགས་འབྲེལ་ལམ། 社交联系  
 solar panels ཉི་མེག། 太阳能  
 soot ལུ་བྲིག། 煤烟，烟尘  
 sow བག་མ། 母猪  
 sporadically ཐོལ་བྱུང་གི་སྐབས་འགར། 偶发地；零星地  
 staple food ཟས་རིགས་གཙོ་བོ། 主食  
 steed ཏ་མཚོག། 骏马  
 stipulate ཁག་ཐེགས་བྱེད་པ། 规定  
 sub-dialect ས་གནས་ཀྱི་ཡུལ་སྐད། 方言分支  
 submerged ལྷ་འོག་ཏུ་ཤོར་བ། 潜入水中  
 subsequent generations མི་རབས་རྗེས་མ། 后代  
 subsidy འཚོ་སྤོན་རོགས་དུལ། 补贴  
 subsistence འཚོ་བའི་ཆ་རྒྱུ། 生存来源，生计  
 sufficient འདང་ངེས་ཀྱི། 足够的，充分的  
 suitable འོས་འཚམ། རན་བོ། 适合的  
 summertime དབྱར་ཁ། 夏季  
 sumptuous ལྷས་སྒྲོས་ཅན། 奢侈的  
 sunflower seeds ཉི་མ་མེ་རྟོག་གི་སོན་འབྲ། 葵花子  
 suppression མགོ་གཞོན། འབྱར་འཛོམས། 压制，抑制  
 taboo བགག་ལྷ་ཅན། མི་ཚོག་པའི། 禁忌的  
 tape player སྤྱ་གཏོང་འབྲུལ་འཁོར། 放音机

tattered ལྷལ་པོ། རྩལ་རལ། 破烂的， 破碎的  
 tension ropes འཐེན་རྩྱེད་ཅན་གྱི་ཐག་པ། 拉紧绳  
 territory མངའ་རིས། མངའ་ཁོངས། 领土  
 three-dimensional དུགས་ཁེང་དཔངས་གསུམ་གྱི། ལངས་གཟུགས་གྱི། 三维的  
 throne རྒྱལ་ཁྲི། 王座  
 thrushes ཐྱུ་ཙ་གའི་རིགས། 鸣禽  
 township ཞང་སྡིད་གཞུང། 乡镇  
 tractors རྩོད་སྟོག་འཕུལ་འཁོར། རྩོད་འཁོར། 拖拉机  
 traditional folk songs དཔངས་སྐད་གསུང་གི། 民歌  
 traditional robes རྩོལ་རྒྱན་གྱི་ལྗེ་བ། 传统的礼服  
 traditionally རྒྱན་སྟོལ་ཏྲར། རྩོལ་ལུགས། 传统上， 照惯例  
 transparent ཐྱེ་གསལ་ནང་གསལ། 透明的  
 transport taxes ཁྲལ་དུལ་སྐྱེལ་འདྲེན། 运输税收  
 trapezoid ཕྱོགས་གཉིས་ཐང་གཤམ་ཅན་གྱི་རྩུར་བཞེ་མ། 梯形， 不等边四边形  
 tug-of-war ཐག་འཐེན་འགུན་ལུར། 拔河  
 turmoil ཟེང་འཁྱུག། 混乱  
 tutelary deity སྤང་མ། 守护神  
 un-chipped bowls ཁ་ཆག་མེན་པའི་དཀར་ཡོལ། 没有缺口的碗  
 unemployed ལས་ཀ་མ་ཐོབ་པའི། ལས་ཤོར། 失业的  
 unfortunately བསོད་བདེ་མེད་པར། 不幸地  
 uninhabited གཞིས་མ་ཆགས་པའི། མི་མེད་ལོང་སྟོང། 无人居住的  
 uproots རྩ་མེད་གཏོང་བ། 根除  
 vegetarian དཀར་ཟས་བ། ཤ་མི་ཟ་མཁན། 素食者  
 venerate སྤྱི་བོས་བཀྟར་བ། 尊敬  
 vertical slits ཐྱེན་དུ་ཕྱོགས་པའི་གཤགས་ཁ། 垂直的裂缝， 狭长的切口  
 via བརྒྱུད་ནས། 经由， 通过  
 vicinity ཉེ་འཁོར། ཉེ་འགུལ། 邻近的  
 virtuous དགེ་མཚན་ལྡན་པའི། མཛེངས་སྦྱོང་ལྡན་པའི། 善良的； 有道德的  
 well-being བདེ་ཐང། 福利； 幸福  
 wiggle གཡུག་གཡུག་བྱེད་པ། 摇动  
 wood steamer ཤིང་འཁོལ། ཁོལ་ཚགས། 蒸笼

zodiac animals རོ་རེས། རོ་རྟགས། 生肖

## APPENDIX THREE: WYLIE

### TWO-LETTERS

ཀ	ག	ཅ	ཇ	ཉ	ད	ན	པ	བ
ka	ga	ca	ja	ta	da	na	pa	ba
མ	ལ	ཟ	ཡ	ར	འ	ས	ཏ	
ma	wa	za	ya	ra	la	sa	ha	

### THREE-LETTERS

ཁ	ཆ	ཐ	ཕ	ང	ཧ	ཅ	ཇ	ཞ	ཤ
kha	cha	tha	pha	nga	nya	tsa	dza	zha	sha

### FOUR-LETTERS

ཨ
tsha

### VOWELS AND A CHUNG

ཨ	ཨི	ཨུ	ཨེ	ཨོ	ཨ་
a	i	u	e	o	'a

## APPENDIX FOUR: EVALUATIVE ADJECTIVES

### BEST

one of the best I have (read/ come across/ seen)

first-rate

exceptional

outstanding

brilliant

remarkable

fantastic

amazing

excellent

great

very good

good

so-so (this is informal and not used in written English)

passable

OK

unremarkable

average

mediocre

bad

just OK

poor

very bad

terrible

dreadful

appalling

awful

execrable

inexcusable

atrocious

abysmal

one of the worst imaginable

### WORST